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Howitt

TALLANGETTA,

THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

A STORY OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA,"

&c. &c.

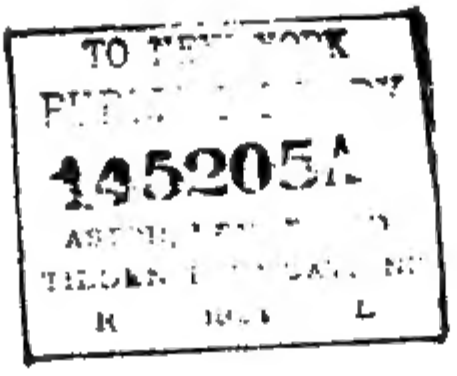
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS

1857.



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PREFACE.

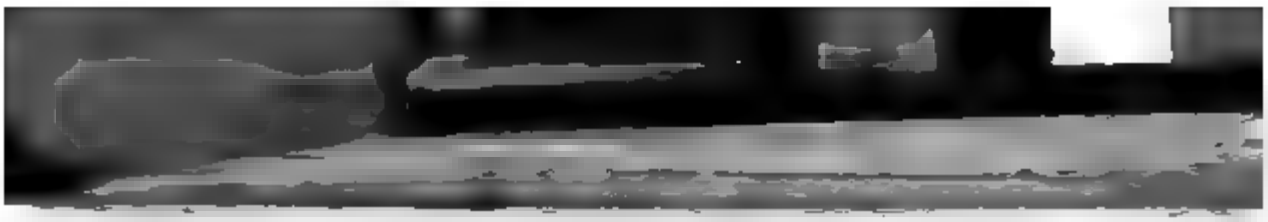
In these volumes it has been my object to depict the various phases of Australian life and character more fully than could be done in my "Two Years in Victoria." Perhaps the reader will be surprised to find in the Bush and in the competitive hurry of the new colonial city some of the personages who figure here. But it requires only a brief sojourn in a colony like that of Victoria to remind you that its population is made up of the overflowings of England and many other countries, and that these overflowings have carried with them every possible theory and practice, every idea, feeling, passion, speculation, pursuit, amusement, and imagination which are fermenting in the old countries.

When the reader comes upon a certain personage in these pages, Dr. Spenser Grayson, I beg him not

to treat him as an imaginary one. If he will turn to a file of the *Times* newspaper of 1853 he will find a letter of Sir William à Becket's, late Chief Justice of Victoria, giving an account of this very man, under one of his aliases, as he came before him; and in the *Melbourne Argus* he would find an additional account, on reprinting Sir William's letter, of the remarkable poetical genius of this man, who, the editor says, sent them by far the best poetry they ever received.

But perhaps no character would be less expected in the gold colony than that of the spiritualist, Dr. Woolstan, or Mr. Flavel, the seer, whom I have introduced here. Yet it was in the far bush that I was first surprised by an exhibition of table-turning, and, what is more curious, we have now, at this moment, an Australian spiritualist in London, astonishing daily circles of the most intelligent and unsuperstitious classes by demonstrations far more surprising than those I have assigned to Dr. Woolstan at Tallangetta.

When that psychological phenomenon — which may now be truly termed a new yet decided feature



of social life — had only advanced to the stage of table-turning, Mr. Faraday thought he had completely laid the ghost of the question by attributing the rotatory motion of a table to the muscular action of the persons putting the tips of their fingers upon it. But a man cannot well have gone much amongst the inquiring classes of society — and I mean private and select society, not public and promiscuous assemblies, where some professional Medium exhibits — who has not seen phenomena which will require not only something beyond Mr. Faraday's theory, but beyond any theorising upon any yet known physical principles, to explain. We are told by numbers of people of first-rate education and talents, people perfectly sane, perfectly honourable, wide-awake as any of us, who hate a lie and despise humbug, that tables do not now merely turn round by the imposition of hands, but heavy ones rise from the floor to the ceiling, leaving everyone's hands below and out of reach, turn over and descend sometimes to the floor, legs uppermost: and these, we are assured, are but of the lowest class of the physical demonstrations of the kind. In numbers of families the daily conversa-

tion with the spirits of their departed friends, as they believe, goes on as regularly as with those still incarnate; painting, writing, speaking by spiritual influence, are freely exercised, and that in the families of men of good status in church, in state, in army, in navy, in literature and science. All round us this state of things prevails, to an extent which few have any full conception of; and I have myself seen, in most trustworthy and distinguished quarters, things which I have no hesitation in pronouncing to be deserving not of sneering, not of huffing off without inquiry, but of a calm yet serious and careful observation, as of a social and psychological phenomenon of singular and impressive features, of wide extent, and rapidly-advancing development. Such careful and philosophical investigation would detect the error if such error exists, lead to explanation if explanation be possible, whilst, if there be a truth in it, however disguised or undeveloped, turning a cold shoulder to the sun does not put it out — it only leaves the sun shining on your backs.

Sir David Brewster and Lord Brougham have dipped their toes in the rising ocean of inquiry; we

yet want those who, with philosophical genius, will apply a philosophical spirit and patience to the subject. In all ages spiritualism has been exhibiting itself in one form or another; and there is a very old adage that where there is smoke there is pretty certainly fire. In the long ages of the sacred history, in the remarkable centuries which succeeded the first spread of Christianity, in the mythic structures and creeds of ancient nations, in India, China (familiar with rapping and table-turning these thousand years), Egypt, Greece, and Rome, under all the distortions and concealments of magic, witchcraft, the Rosicrucian philosophy, and the occult sciences of the middle ages, spiritual agency has been working, according to the firmest convictions of the greatest minds of those countries and times. As Socrates had his "familiar spirit," Numa his Egeria, as the Arabs had their genii, Friar Bacon his brazen head, and Paracelsus his inward illumination, his "Einhauchende Geister," so Jacob Böhme and George Fox, in recent, and Zschokke in our times, astonished their cotemporaries by their revelations.

Certainly, in all ages, there has been a very great smoke in that quarter.

But my business with it here is only artistic. Spiritualism has produced, in America, not merely rapping, but the poems of Harris, one volume of which only I have read,—"The Legend of the Golden Age,"—and which I do not hesitate to pronounce amongst the finest poetry since Shelley and Byron; finest in all the great essentials of poetry, in the power, vividness, boundless sweep and entire originality of imagination, in its plastic energy and affluence of language, and in its bold and unconventional, yet sublime philosophy. The smoke of spiritualism, therefore, is now visible enough; the fire is burning near enough to us to warrant that use of it in imaginative literature which our great dramatists and fictionists, which Shakspeare, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, Scott, Beckford, Bulwer, which Goethe in Germany and Poe and Hawthorne in America, have made of the mysteries and the popular excitements of the times in which their fictions are laid. Where I found it I have used it—in the Bush; and that not in the person of a humbug

or a charlatan, but in men educated, scientific, serious, acute in all their relations, profoundly religious, and admittedly honest. I have seized Time by that old forelock of his, at which he has had many a lusty tug, and been one of the first to plant a new element in prose fiction. The philosophy of the question belongs to the philosophers. As for the poets, they have in all times settled the affair in their own way. Milton will have it that—

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep."

Philip Bailey, one of the most spiritual and philosophical poets of the age, contends, in "Festus," that by us of to day—

> "The most material, immaterial
> Departments of pure wisdom are despised.
> For well we know that, properly prepared,
> Soul's self-adapted knowledge to receive,
> Are by the truth desired, illumined; man's
> Spirit, extolled, dilated, clarified,
> By holy meditation and divine
> Lore, fits him to convene with purer forms
> Which do unseen surround us aye and gladden
> In human good and exaltation. Thus,
> The face of heaven is not more clear to one
> Than to another, outwardly; but one,

By strong intention of his soul perceives,
Attracts, unites himself to essences
And elemental spirits of wider range
And more beneficent nature, by whose aid
Occasion, circumstance, futurity,
Impress on him their image, and impart
Their secrets to his soul. Thus, chance and lot
Are sacred things; thus, dreams are verities.
But oh! alas! for all earth's loftier lore,
And spiritual sympathy of worlds!"

I must now state, that a few of the episodical sketches in these pages have already appeared in the "Household Words;" and Mr. Dickens has sent me a letter from Mr. John Fawkner, who has so long occupied a very distinguished position in Victoria, not only as the oldest settler, the "Father of the Colony," as he is styled, but as a patriotic and able member of the Legislature, expressing his unqualified pleasure in their perusal. I may also present the reader with an amusing bit of colonial criticism upon those "Squatter Papers," as the *Melbourne Argus* calls them:—

"These capital sketches are evidently the work of two hands. The stories have been written in Australia by some one knowing the place well, but not brilliant as a writer, and some very first-class writer, probably

Dickens himself, has breathed into them the breath of genius. In some places phrases occur that could not have been written by any one who had ever been in Australia, but which are wonderfully conducive to literary effect; and in others we can perceive unmistakable traces of local knowledge. The polishing process is, however, so skilfully performed, and the general effect is so good, that it is only by close observation that we are enabled here and there to detect the tool-marks."—*Journal of Australasia.*

Let Australasia cherish that critic; he has seen all the way through the millstone, and no man can see further. It is needless to say that no "two hands" have touched a syllable of those papers in the "Household Words" but my own two.

In all that relates to the history, natural history, life, character, and actual personages of the colony which chiefly figure in these volumes, I have adhered as faithfully to the fact as in my "Two Years in Victoria," of which a distinguished officer there said: "Mr. Howitt's volumes are not like the colony,—they are the colony itself." But a still more remarkable testimony to the impression of verisimilitude in the "Two Years in Victoria" is to be found in the

following letter from the popular author of "It is Never Too Late to Mend!" which I print by his permission:—

"6, Bolton Row, Mayfair: March 2.

"DEAR SIR,—Should you ever fall in with a matter-of-fact romance called 'It is Never Too Late to Mend,'—and should you wade as far in it as the Australian scenes, you will not be surprised at this letter from me.

"To avoid describing Hyde Park, and calling it Australia, I read some thirty books about that country; but yours was infinitely the best. In reading you I found I was in the hands of a man who had really been there, and had seen things with his own eyes, and judged them with his own judgment, and, rarer art still, could paint them to the life. Your vivid scenes took hold of me; and your colours are the charm of many of my best pages. I could not tell you all my obligations; but some of them I can. You restored my faith in nature. A pack of noodles had been out there, and came home, and told us the air had no perfume, and the birds no song.

"The real fact is, that there have not yet been in Australia two centuries of poets to tell people what to hear and what to smell. You extinguished that piece of cant. You smelt the land like cowslips ninety miles off; and you not only heard the birds, but described the song and note of each with a precision of detail that were invaluable. That passage of yours was a nugget.

"I made use of it in a full description of the rising

sun; and it is, to my fancy, the light of my whole picture. I had from you, too, the snow-storm, — the flakes as large as the palm of your hand, and the great branches of trees rent from the stems with reports like cannon, by the weight of superincumbent snow.

"Then, in the details of digging, it was you who told me the furtive diggers were discovered by the stream coming down discoloured.

"*Item* — the diggers steeped in cold water from the waist downwards, yet steaming with perspiration from the waist upwards. Two out of three comic advertisements in the mine are also from you.

"*Adde huc* — the thunder of the cradles, the bottles sown broad-cast over the land, with other happy touches of the sort, and one divinely felicitous phrase, — 'the sentences measled with oaths and indelicate expressions.' In short, I have taken from you far more than I could have taken with decency if our two works had not been heterogeneous. As it is, I hope you are too candid and too good-natured to grudge me, who can never hope to see that wonderful land, a few colours from your palette. A traveller with a painter's eye is a rarity. He must make up his mind to teach the artists of the pen as well as the public.

"But though it is not in Nature to refrain from profiting by you, there is one casualty it is my duty to guard you against.

"You are, I hear, about to bring out a cheap edition of 'Land, Labour, and Gold.' Many will make their first acquaintance with your volumes after reading mine.

There must be no doubt as to who is the original where you and I are found in amiable but suspicious harmony.

"To conclude: I wish, my dear Sir, I could make you some return by sending all my readers to your two rich volumes. I can assure them the pearls I have strung from them on my string are surrounded by hundreds of others of equal intrinsic value.

"May you visit many countries, and may I sit by the fire and see them on your glowing pages.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

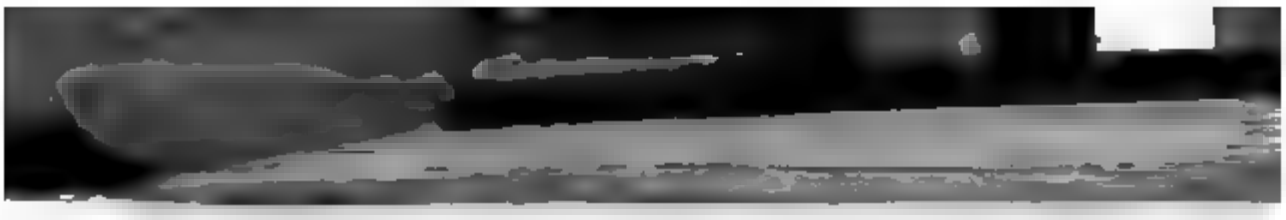
"CHARLES READE."

"WILLIAM HOWITT, Esq."

Perhaps I may save the reader some trouble if I tell him that there are two or three Tallangettas in Victoria; but our Tallangetta is sufficiently determined by the locality; and should any one be unable to recollect the house on that spot, let him understand that I built it since he was there.

A new edition of the "Two Years in Victoria" is in preparation, complete in one volume, which will include the most recent information regarding the colony.

LONDON: *June* 17*th*, 1857.



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TALLANGETTA,

OR

THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

CHAPTER I.

GOING UP TO THE STATION.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. The sun of early summer, that is, of November in its first days, was descending over the Australian woods after his glowing career of the day, and now had perceptibly abated its fire. Clear and genially it still shone in the cloudless sky, but to the spectator traversing the forest, it appeared at no great height above the lofty trees, and no longer pursued him with its consuming fire. The silence which had lain in the woods through the day, was now broken by the merry cicadas, and the mole cricket in the warm

twigs of the fragrant pepper
laughter of the dacelo, or j
meant for an encore. The
still more life and refreshmer
cattle, which had hidden the
shade of the wattles, or stood
stream, now came out, and gr
the bush.

At this moment two your
been seen, had any one bee
cantering briskly along a sort
the woods. The one was a y
height and handsome features,
lady bearing a striking likeness
evidently brother and sister.
it would have been difficult t
about one or two-and-twenty.
clad in a light linen coat and
waistcoat, and only a bright blu
finest and slightest fabric, tied

and a handsome revolver at his waist, were clear indications that he was fresh to the antipodes.

The young lady had the same aristocratic well-defined style of features, but of course more delicate. They were at once beautiful, feminine, and spirited; and the young man's handsome, but far from strong brown beard, gave the greatest point of contrast to their faces. She was as lightly clad as her brother; a simple skirt of dark French merino being merely slipped over a muslin morning dress, instead of a riding habit, and a broad white straw hat with a blue veil on it, defending her head from the sun. A mass of rich brown hair was tastefully disposed at the back of her head, and had evidently been shaken by her ride, so as to fall in a rather loose, but beautiful manner on her neck.

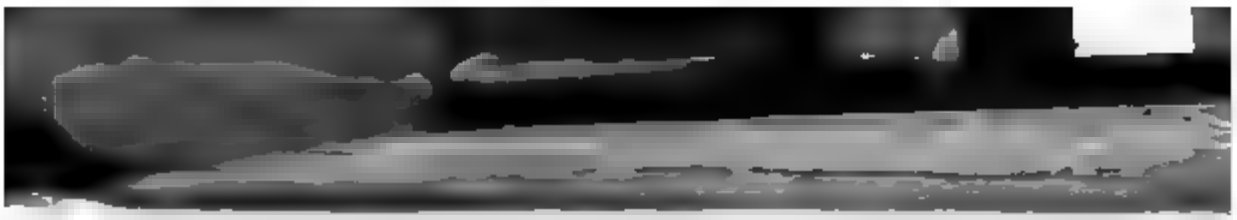
The two young people came cantering on, followed by a grand black and white Newfoundland dog, and an active, sinewy-looking, tawny bull-terrier. The woods opened more and more on their left as they advanced, the trees not being altogether absent, but more widely scattered. On the right and again ahead of them the forest continued, to the eye at least, dense and unbroken. But here in the opener part they came at once to a charming little lake, or what in this country we should merely style a large pond or reservoir.

grew here and there in full f
effect on its further banks, a
had reached there stood onl
gigantic proportions. Extensi
flags occupied portions of the
except on this side, and the sp
decide that plenty of water
there, but at this moment no
betrayed their presence. All
not a ripple stirred the surfac
for it lay too deep below its bar
the breeze.

"Bravo! This is the very
camp," said the young man. "
and, if I am not mistaken, fish
boot," running his eye rapidly
the reed-beds.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the y
a charming camping place!"

The dogs were already swim-



horses down a convenient slope, for it is wonderful how nature has prepared these accessible places by her wilderness pools and streams for her approaching family, often with as much care and forethought as man could have exercised, and frequently more than he does exercise after he comes into possession. They then leaped lightly from their horses, the youth giving a hand to his sister, and then proceeding to take the saddles and bridles from the warm steeds, and placing these at the foot of a tree, hobbled the noble creatures, and let them graze at large.

While he was doing this, the young lady, throwing her whip upon the saddles, slipped off her riding skirt, and proceeded in her unencumbered state to collect sticks and dry leaves for a fire. "Where shall we have the domestic hearth, Charles?" said the handsome girl, as she stood a moment with the bundle of sticks in her hands.

"Oh! just far enough from that fallen log, Geordy, so that it may serve for a seat," and as he spoke he came forward, and took out a lucifer box to give her a light. There was soon a famous blaze on a clean, green sort of table-land near the lake, and this served for a directing signal to a carriage which now was seen coming at a good rate down the forest opening. It was a sort of American waggon, long

and light, on springs, drawn by a pair of excellent, strong carriage horses, and furnished with a circular awning of white canvass.

"Well done," cried a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, who sate on the low front of the waggon, driving. "This is a prime place, indeed, for a halt. Why, youngsters, you must have ordered it beforehand."

"Of course," said the young man, "the last time I travelled this road;" and he looked very merry.

"And as the road is so very much frequented, papa," said the laughing girl, "it was quite as well to drop a line by post, to secure lodgings."

"Quite right! quite right!" shouted a couple of female voices from beneath the awning of the waggon. "And so now, perhaps, you will let us out that we may survey our quarters."

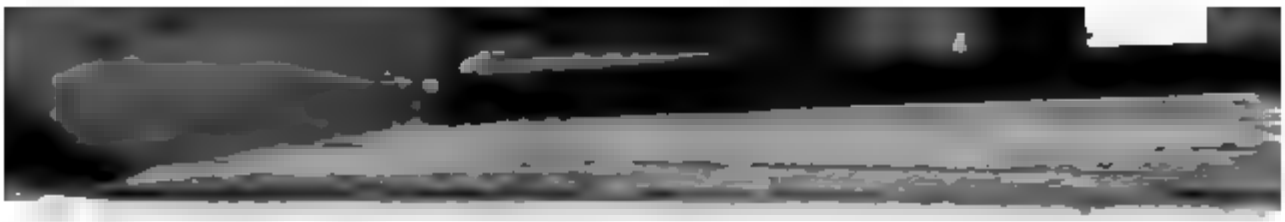
At this there was seen a man tumbling out behind the waggon, and in great haste to turn back its canvass curtains and let down a ladder, down which presently descended three of womankind, whom we must more particularly introduce to the reader. The first was a tall, slender figure, whom, at the first glance, you perceived to be a lady by the quiet elegance of her manner, and the cultivated expression of a still handsome face, though she was evidently approaching middle age. Next followed a

little plump round body, with a very round, rosy, good-natured countenance, and of apparently the same age, who advanced towards the two young people who were still busy at the fire, the young man having run for a kettle of water, and set it close to the fire to boil, while the young lady was folding up her riding-skirt and laying it aside in more orderly fashion under the great tree. This little cosy body, we may inform the reader, was aunt to the young people, and went in the family by the familiar name of Aunt Judith; and we suppose the sagacious reader has already divined that the tall gentleman and tall lady were the father and mother of the young ones. The third woman was no other than Peggy Wilks, who, in England, had occupied for many years the post of laundry woman to the family, and was here as maid of all-work, in her fortieth year, accompanied, nevertheless, by her husband, the quondam gardener, but now miscellaneous man — Abner Wilks, the same strong fellow who was just seen tumbling so precipitately out of the waggon.

Here you have the whole group, and let me tell you such a group as you do not light upon every day in the Australian bush. If you had been told that this was the governor and his family taking an ex-

cursion up the country, you would have said, "just so, I see it, it can be nobody else," for neither squatter, merchant, commissioner, nor digger carry about with them that unassuming prestige of rank and station. Gentlemen you would find amongst these classes, real gentlemen and many, and amongst commissioners a great deal of pretence, and a morbid love of gold lace and parade dreadfully demonstrative of the parvenu. But in this family you saw no pretence; you felt that there was the reality, and only wondered what had brought them here.

Listen, and I will drop a word or two into your ear. Sir Thomas Fitzpatrick was heir to a noble property in the north and midland counties of England. Like many another country gentleman, he had his tastes for horses, racing, and sporting in various ways. His property became embarrassed, and when he was in difficulty up started a kind cousin, Sir Patrick Fitzpatrick, and laid claim to the estate. Astonishing as was the fact, totally till that moment undreamt of, yet Sir Patrick commenced a suit for the recovery of the hereditary family estates, and won it. What was most strange of all too, he won it by proving, to the satisfaction of a jury at least, that Sir Thomas was illegitimate. Illegitimate! Why nobody, not Sir Thomas by any means, had ever



thought of such a thing. However, odd enough, when Sir Patrick asserted and proved, on the evidence of letters and an old servant of the family long ago dismissed by Sir Thomas's father, that Sir Thomas's father and mother never were married, Sir Thomas found himself totally unable to prove the marriage. It had been a hasty one, contracted abroad at Florence, unknown to the relations of the family on either side, at the ambassador's. But the ambassador was long dead; and being then a single man, at the time this took place his family could produce no record of such a transaction. The chaplain, too, had gone afterwards to India, and no inquiries could trace him beyond a certain point.

Here was a dilemma! No certificate of her marriage could be found amongst the papers of Sir Thomas's mother, nor yet amongst those of his father; yet during their lives, and for years afterwards, not a doubt had ever been whispered by any party whatever of the *bonâ fide* marriage of these most respectable and honourable people. What had put Sir Patrick on this scent? How had he stumbled all at once on such a discovery?—for such it must have been, and a late one, or he would not have suffered Sir Thomas to enjoy the estates for a single day—he was not that man.

But he asserted his claims and he made them good, ay, again and again. Sir Thomas, for want of further means, had been compelled to yield to his adversary and retire from the field. His lot was such as is common on all such occasions; he found not a single friend to stand by him. On the contrary, he saw all his once numerous clan of friends, so called, and acquaintances who had feasted and fluttered round him, suddenly flock over to the enemy, and feast and flutter round him in the same hall and rooms; the same worthy people who had at first expressed their unbounded astonishment at the audacity of Sir Peter setting up so burlesque a claim, now, in the same sympathising zeal, expressing their equally unbounded astonishment at the rascality of the *pretended* Sir Thomas so long coolly keeping Sir Patrick out of his own.

Yes, there was one friend who stuck by them, and that was Aunt Judith. But then Aunt Judith, Sir Thomas's sister, was included in the same category and branded with the same stigma. Poor Aunt Judith, who was generally good humour itself, had been violently indignant at the aspersion on her mother, and on her brother and his family; but as to her mother's marriage, she said they might just as well tell her that Durham Cathedral was a pickled

onion as that her mother was not married. Why, she had heard her mother talk of the marriage a hundred times; and all the hurry and fright and strange accompaniments of it. And how they had lived in a little cottage at Capri, and afterwards at Naples; and of their climbing Vesuvius, and of their happy but uneasy life till they had news and full forgiveness from England. Not married, indeed! If ever there was a pure-hearted and happy-minded woman, as far as her own position went, it was her revered mother. No cloud, no obscurity, no mystery ever hovered for a moment over her name or her angelic brow. She was the soul of piety and domestic love. Luckily for Aunt Judith and Sir Thomas, the virtuous and triumphant Sir Patrick could not touch her property, and it was handsome. It had not come by inheritance, but had been bequeathed. With this she had supported Sir Thomas in his struggles against the new claimant as much as she could without leaving the family without resources; and to withdraw them all for a time from the scene of defeat and mortification, she had proposed to spend a few years in Australia, where, with her sufficient remaining means, they could secure a station, and live a new life till things took a turn.

"And they will take a turn," Aunt Judith con-

tended most undauntedly. "The whole thing," she protested, "is a hoax, a lie, a villany. That wretch of a lady's maid must, by some means, have got hold of her mother's marriage certificate, and carried it off to make a trade of, but, as to the letters produced on the trial, they were forgeries, infamous, diabolical, detestable forgeries. Ah, well!" she would add, "wait awhile, wait awhile, we shall see. These things do n't go on for ever. There is a righteous God yet, and He will find them out. That fiend of a maid one of these days will most likely be terrified at the approach of death, or something of the kind, for a bad conscience is worse than a bad cancer, and when it gives an awful pang some day the wretch will cry out unawares. Yes, mark me, that will be it — does she think God can't find her base, shallow tricks out? Poor foolish thing! as if she could cheat the Almighty! Only wait; all will be right!"

We shall only here say further, that these strange circumstances had not passed over the present party without extreme and violent suffering. Sir Thomas's hair had grown very grey, and the stamp of fierce alternations of passion and unlooked-for affliction had left their traces on his fine countenance, in a requently clouded and often dejected expression,

though he, at times, now again wore his former cheerful and even sportive manner; for he had always been of a frank, mirthful, though unfortunately ardent and headstrong temperament. Lady Fitzpatrick had suffered severely in health and spirits, but now she was much restored by the pleasant affection and indefatigable endeavours of all around her to contribute to her consolation. As for Aunt Judith, if she could be satisfied for her dear relatives, she would be as perfectly happy here as at home in their most prosperous days. Her life was so centred in the lives of those her dearly beloved relatives, their happiness was so completely hers, that she had refused all offers of marriage, as wanting nothing more than her independence and their society. The children seemed quite as much her children as anybody's, and everything pleasant in the family seemed especially hers. Lady Fitzpatrick was not merely her sister-in-law, but her very dearest friend, who relied on her judgment more than on all the female world besides. And then she had such a love of the country, of trees, plants, flowers, birds, insects, all sorts of living things, that to be wandering here through those boundless forests, and seeing and hearing something new continually, were to her a perfect dream of delight. She entered into all the

spirit of this vagabond life, and helped to cook, and make beds, and do a hundred things that, from their novelty and from the utter impossibility of their ever doing them at home, produced a constant succession of fun and laughter which made her almost, and sometimes altogether, forget the past and its troubles.

And so I think that is enough of knowledge of our travellers for the present, except that they had resolved to drop all title while in this colony. "I will be no pretender," said Sir Thomas; "if I cannot win my old title I will not wear it. Therefore, they were plain Mr. and Mrs. Fitzpatrick and no more, except in the eyes and mouths of Abner and Peggy Wilks, who continued to treat them with the same marked deference, and to blunder out continually their old titles. They had been now several days on their journey to their station, and found it quite delightful. Out of this tilted waggon came speedily a variety of articles and apparatus for the evening's meal and the night's accommodation. First a tent, which Charles Fitzpatrick and his father very soon had erected, while Abner unharnessed the horses and turned them out, hanging the harness on the waggon-pole, and throwing over it a rug to defend it from the night dew. Then came out four pointed stakes and a board, and the four stakes being driven firmly into

the ground, and the board laid upon them, behold the supper table.

That done, there was Georgina, or, as she was more commonly called, Geordy, with a fine white table-cloth to spread upon it, while Aunt Judith was progging in a basket for the necessary cups, saucers, and plates. "La!" exclaimed Aunt Judith, holding up sundry fragments of crockery, "another smash I declare. It is all through those dreadful gullies, they are enough to break anything. I am sure I think they have broken my back a dozen times to-day. Why do n't they make bridges, I wonder?"

"For the same reason, I suppose," said Mr. Fitz-patrick, "that they do n't make earthenware here-abouts, or we might buy some. That is, because there is nobody to make them."

"They would not be a very good investment, I expect," said Georgina, "just yet."

"They would be quite as profitable," said Aunt Judith, pulling out a cream jug without a handle, and with only half a spout, and saying parenthetically, "Lord bless us! another. They would be quite as profitable as that investment of jolts in my backbone that I've got. But goodness! what's that?"—Turning suddenly at a great rushing and pother at the fire.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Georgina, "it is the kettle

boiling over. Peggy, Peggy, bring the tea." Whereupon Peggy, looking very broiled, appeared from the tent, and diving into a box of sundries by the waggon, approached with a packet of tea.

"You look hot, Peggy," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"Hot, my lady! yes ma'am, I mean; its these flies, drat 'em. They're at me just as they've bin since I set foot in this fly-blown country. It's no Christian country, anybody may see by that. Why do n't they christen it, my lady, ma'am? well, its no manner of use, my lady, it must out. But if they 'd only christen the country and drive the flies into the Red Sea, it would be a blessing. I hit here and there, and it's of no use; I only hit my own nose and mouth; and as for Abner, he has got all the skin burnt off his nose with wearing that silly bit of a cap instead of a good rational hat; but he says he does not like to do that, because it 's making himself even with Sir, that is, Master and Mr. Charles."

"Oh, by all means let him wear a hat if he have one," said all the ladies together.

"Thank you, my ladies," said Peggy, "it will be a comfort. As for me, I have got one fly down my throat, and two up my nose, and one acchully into one of my ears, and its going boo-woo-woo, just like a mill wheel, contindjally, the mischief on it!"

"Poor Peggy!" said Aunt Judith, "if it 's not out after tea we 'll try to drown it by pouring some water into the ear. But see, tea is ready. Pray call the gentlemen!"

The gentlemen meantime had been very busy carrying beds and bedclothes into the tent, which was the sleeping apartment of the ladies and Peggy; while Mr. Fitzpatrick and Charles had mattresses laid in the waggon, and Abner one spread under it, where the dogs took up their quarters near him.

All now was arranged, and on the tea-table appeared a substantial meal of a cold parrot pie and various cakes; the pie being a present at a station where they dined that day, and Peggy was at the same time busy over a panful of energetically frizzing and crackling beef stakes; and Abner coming from the lake with some of the coolest water he could procure, by dipping with a weighted dipper into its deepest and shadiest part, to put the butter in, which manifested a strong tendency to run into oil. The tea-table was surrounded by a number of folding chairs, which our party now took possession of, and the table, with its snowy cloth and neat apparatus and rich provision, surrounded by the travellers, presented in that pleasant wilderness a very unique and pleasant spectacle.

As they sate at their tea-supper, our travellers looked about and expressed to each other their enjoyment of the scene. Two laughing-jackasses came, and settling on a tree near them, face to face, and raising their heads as high as they could, laughed into each other's faces, in the most obstreporous, chuckling, rattling, hoo, hoo-ing laughter imaginable. You would have said they had just seen something most prodigiously ludicrous, but it was merely their way of saying good night to each other, for they were about to go to roost, as they saw the sun was setting. Then flew past a number of those beautiful black-and-white dove-like birds, called magpie larks, crying "chain, chain;" and the next moment Aunt Judith cried out, "Oh, look! look, what a beauty!" and all eyes following saw a little bird with a most glowing scarlet breast and brilliant blue back, sitting on the pole of the carriage. It was the Australian robin, which, much more magnificent than ours, yet has all the same quiet manner, and love of haunting human neighbourhood.

A far more striking spectacle, however, drew the eyes of the party another way. On their left hand a grand-looking fellow of a wild bull advanced through the forest at the head of a noble herd of cattle, and arrested by the sight of the party and their fire, the

stupendous fellow stood and surveyed them for some minutes with a solemn look, as questioning whether they meant any mischief to himself or company, and then stalked calmly on, followed by the whole herd.

"How grand!" exclaimed Aunt Judith. "Do n't the proud creatures seem to enjoy themselves in these wilds? They clearly feel their natural rights and independence here. They are the sovereigns of the wilderness, and we are only intruders."

"And, by the bye," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, starting up, "let us intrude, Charles, on the wild-fowl in the water here, before it is dark."

They snatched up their guns, taking each a side of the little lake. Bounce, the great Newfoundland, and Club, the little tawny bull-terrier, were speedily swimming eagerly in the water, and disappearing amongst the flags and reeds. At once there were sundry startled quackings of wild ducks, and up rose a cloud of them with a stunning noise of their wings. Charles and his father knocked down about half-a-dozen of them with each a single shot, and waited for fresh appearances. They did not wait long; two or three blue herons, and what was more attractive, a flock of large wild geese, rose from the reeds, and two of these last were brought down. While the

gentlemen re-loaded, Abner Wilks encouraged the dogs to bring out the fallen game, pointing them in the right directions, and ever and anon throwing a stick to where there lay some one of the dead birds. When these were secured, they set the dogs to explore the reeds afresh, but no further fowl arose; a wounded duck, however, was driven out, and continued for some time to dive and scuffle about, till a shot finished it, and little Club brought it to land.

Here was rich provision for to-morrow's larder, and the company now all betook themselves to their several beds, for it was growing rapidly dark, and they meant to be stirring with the earliest dawn.

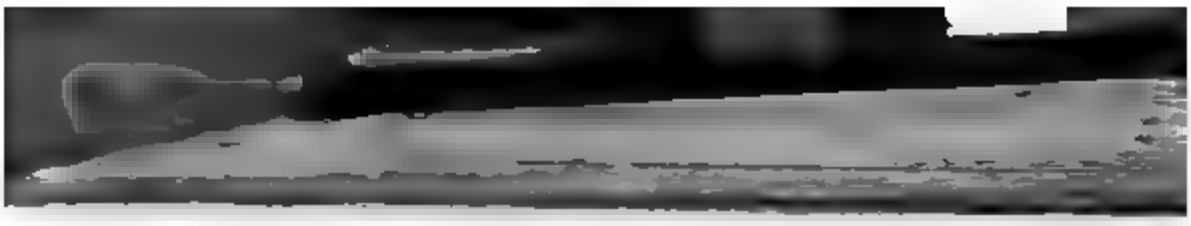
With that dawn the travellers were all on foot. Abner had hunted up the horses, and Peggy was busy frying a couple of wild ducks, already cut to pieces, for there was no time to cook them whole, and soon the breakfast table was covered by the ladies with ample provision of tea, coffee, and cakes and bread from their stores. The horses came and looked on as expectingly as the dogs, and Mr. Fitzpatrick carved up a good large loaf, and gave them each repeated slices, which they devoured with manifest satisfaction, while Bounce and Club were as liberally supplied with bones and other morsels from the table. Breakfast over, amid abundance of pleasant chat, the tent

was struck, the table and beds packed in the waggon, the horses put into harness and saddle, and the ground being carefully hunted over to see that nothing was left, the party once more set forward.

The day soon grew very warm, but the journey through the woods was delightful. Charles and Georgina rode on in advance, still, however, keeping generally within sight; and the party in the waggon came on as the ground permitted them. Sometimes they rode for miles through the woods, the ground being level, and a simple track of wheels being their guide. All around them the earth was strewn with huge fallen trees and dead branches, and masses of the evergreen gum-tree leaves dried on their boughs in their greenness, ready kindling matter for the travellers' fire. Sometimes they passed over very sterile ground, where yet grew huge trees, and under their shade various acacias, some in bloom and some gone out, and often the golden wattle, showing its last yellow flowers, and lumps of transparent gum-arabic sticking on its crimson branches. Sometimes their way led them over dry stony hills, where the whole ground seemed formerly to have been on fire, and still retained a reddish hue, the stones grinding up under the wheels into the appearance of brick-dust. On these barren ranges the lofty iron-bark trees,

with their great black boles deeply ploughed into furrows, gave a peculiar character to the scene. Then they travelled along green valleys with beautiful slopes on each side, thinly sprinkled with trees, and offering abundant grass to their horses. Up many a hill, and through miles of forest, the travellers descended and walked, ever and anon attracted by some new and beautiful flower, by the singular grass-tree, with its tall flowering rod, or by the volumes of golden mistletoes which hung from the trees, resembling lions' skins at a distance. The gay flocks of parrots and paroquets, the snowy flocks of white cockatoos, the rush and clatter of a vast crowd of black magpies, or the quaint notes of lesser birds, conspicuous above them all being the droll mimicries of the leatherhead, kept them continually amused.

In the afternoon they came suddenly out upon a great plain, and its appearance called forth instant exclamations of delight and astonishment from the ladies. The plain was many miles in length, and three or four miles across; but the whole surface of it was one blaze of gold. It was like a billowy sea of gold, as the breeze rolled over the splendid flowers of which it was composed, and sent towards the travellers a rich fragrance. All round the aureate plain was hemmed in by the dark forests, and over



them, in various directions, showed airily the blue summits of distant mountains.

"We thought you would be rather amazed here," said Mr. Fitzpatrick and Charles, who had themselves been up to the station; and indeed their amazement and delight were unbounded. They all descended, both from carriage and horseback, and ran into the prodigal flower ocean. The scene was in truth remarkable; the flowers consisting principally of two kinds,—a fine large and fragrant hawkweed, and a plant which sent up a dozen or more clean straw-like stems of a yard high from each root, on the summit of each of which was a solid globe of vegetable gold, an inch or more in diameter. Interspersed amongst these were large purple vetches, or Swainsonias, of a most delicious vanilla scent, and various kinds of white and yellow everlastings. The whole were planted by nature on raised beds of a loamy mould, kept as clear from other plants or grass by the same wonderful power, as if it had been done by an army of gardeners; and between these innumerable beds were walks of solid turf, but half hidden by the luxuriant billows of the golden efflorescence.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed the ladies, who walked enraptured about in this glorious garden of nature up to their very waists in the fragrant sea,

and gathering handfuls of the superb blossoms as if they could never have enough.

"But you do not see the grandest thing of all," said Mr. Fitzpatrick. "What is that?" asked the ladies. "What can be more enchanting than this scene?"

Mr. Fitzpatrick pointed, with a face full of significant pleasure, to a hill on the opposite side of the plain, and said, "Tallangetta!"

"Tallangetta!" exclaimed the ladies in one breath, and in the liveliest tone; and they stood in silent delight, as riveted to the spot. The scene, indeed, was well calculated to call forth their admiration. They beheld a range of bold hills,—bold in altitude, but soft and delicate in their outlines. They were covered with grass, and dotted over with trees of a peculiar character—the Casuarinas or Shiacks—part of which, with their more rigid and outstretched branches, resemble pine trees, and others, with theirs drooping gracefully, resembling large trees of broom. None of the ordinary gum-trees grew on the slopes of the hill, but their thick masses appeared here and there peeping from their summits. By places stony crags shot up on these summits, varying the softness of the scene; and to the right swelled up a more lofty hill, the upper parts of which were already scorched by the sun to the pale hue of sere grass.

Half way up this hill stood a white house, consisting of two ranges of buildings, united by a colonnade, and around it extended a considerable space of gardens and vineyards, enclosed in a ring fence.

"That is Tallangetta; that is the Squatter's home," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, evidently delighted with it himself, and seeming at the moment to forget his once far nobler house at the foot of the Cheviots, or the pleasant old brick manor-house on the banks of the Trent.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" again ejaculated the ladies, but in a softer tone, and with tears in their eyes. "Thank God!" said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, "for such a home in such a place." "Yes, thank God indeed," said Aunt Judith; "and you too, dear brother, and my dear Charley, for having chosen such a one. But where is the lake?"

"There!" said Mr. Fitzpatrick, turning and pointing in a direction opposite to the house; and there, at some miles' distance, they saw the waters glittering in the sun over the golden wilderness, and a row of dark trees, seeming to grow in the water as mangroves grow in the sea.

"Let us mount and get on," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "for you will see from the house not only the whole of the lake, but all this wonderful panorama of golden

prairie, boundless breadth of surrounding forests, and mountain summits in the far distance." The whole party were in haste to proceed, their eyes still, however, on the opposite hills, which they perused feature by feature, with all their hollows and projections, their dark green trees, and sprinklings of cattle and of flocks. Still more did their gaze rest on that home which was to be the scene of their pains and pleasures for years to come. But they had not proceeded far when they caught sight of a long train of loaded drays, drawn by teams of many bullocks.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mr. Fitzpatrick, with an air of indignant vexation, "those lazy bullock-drivers have not yet reached the station. A whole fortnight have they been in making a hundred miles, at this time of the year, and the roads so good."

All heads were stretched from the waggon, and eyes directed from horseback, and there indeed they saw six great drays loaded with their furniture, effects, and stores. These they confidently expected had arrived some days ago, and been unpacked; but as they approached the train they began to see cause for the slow progress. Here were these heavily-laden waggons moving, or attempting to move, over the deep, soft, volcanic ground. The wheels sunk almost to the axles, and ploughed up the ground as

they went in wondrous furrows. Most of the drays appeared stuck fast, defying all the efforts of the cattle to move them, though there were from eight to twelve huge strong beasts to every dray, defying them, and all the swearing, and bawling, and hallooaing of the drivers, and that amounted to a most Pandemonean din. The only way of making any progress was by uniting two or three teams, and tearing along by main force for a short distance; then another waggon was brought forward in like manner, and so on in succession. Thus were the men progressing at a tortoise pace, and with a most astonishing labour. As the party drew near, Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was prepared to be very angry, became cooler and cooler the more he saw. He merely remarked, stopping a moment, "that he hoped to have seen them on their return."

"Return!" said the fellow whom he addressed, with true Australian bluntness, "return! but it is n't hopes as draws over ground like this. It is next to more than bullocks can do, let alone hopes. D'ye hear that, mates? The gentleman talks of hopes dragging these tarnation loads of goods through these bloody bogs. Why, if we had much more of this, we should never be there these next hundred years. But, thank Goodness, there is but a little

more; but then there's the hill, and so we must camp at the foot to-night."

Mr. Fitzpatrick drove on, and soon they wound up the hill. "Not a soul is to look round," he said, "till we are at the house, and you will see the whole at once." Charles and Georgina hastened on, and when they arrived they were on the terrace in front of the house to receive them, accompanied by two or three men and a maid-servant. One of the men was the overseer, and another the cook. When the ladies got out of the carriage, they were more than ever enraptured with the view. Below at some distance in front lay the lake, several miles in extent, everywhere surrounded by green, mound-like swells, and then by the wide golden-flowered plains. Few trees grew about the lake, except a row on this side, growing, as they had appeared to do at a distance, in the water, showing that they had sprung there when the lake was less full than at present, and probably marking the course of a stream which issued at the near right-hand corner of the lake, and ran down the valley in a broad shallow expanse amongst trees and bushes. All round showed the vast forests and the distant mountain ranges.

The house itself looked more akin to the bush than it did at a distance. There it had a com-

manding aspect. Here it showed rather homelike than grand. It was white, with stuccoed walls and shingled roofs. The two oblong, square blocks of which it consisted were connected in front, as we have said, by a colonnade, but the pillars on which this rested were merely of white gum-trees, cut just when they had shed their outward bark, and therefore were as round, clean, and white as marble. The roof of the colonnade was also of shingles, and the whole pile was rustic, though ample and comfortable. The buildings with their colonnade enclosed a court which, at the back, was terminated by a lower range of building, forming the kitchen and servants' apartments. There was a small quantity of furniture still in the house, which was intended to supply the overseer's hut, which stood with other huts of stockmen, &c. below, near the lake; and it was only by contrivance that the family could manage to get tea and pass the night. But their goods were at hand, and, with the chairs and mattresses which they had brought with them, they might have been far worse off for the first night in the bush.

The house faced the south-west, and as they sate in a large room at their evening meal they saw the lake, lying with its unruffled but now sombre surface, beneath them, and the sun, huge and red, descend

upon the misty ridge of distant mountains, giving a feeling of wonderful solitude to the whole scene. A deep silence fell over the party. It seemed as if that spectacle, sublime as it was, of the ensanguined luminary disappearing over all that world of lonely woods, had brought with it a sense of their real distance from their past life and haunts; as if it called up the memories of those things, brilliant and dear, and sorrowful, between which and themselves a world had interposed itself, and made them feel, as it were, for the first time in its full extent, their vast sacrifices and their utter isolation. With a deep sigh each arose and withdrew, fearing to tell his fellow the sadness which oppressed him, yet summoning as much of cheerfulness as they could command into the wished good-night.

CHAP. II.

SETTLING DOWN.

OUR friends at Tallangetta rose early in the morning, refreshed and full of new spirits. The sadness of the previous evening was gone with it, and the beauty of the place in which they found themselves inspired them with lively thankfulness for so sweet a home in so superb a scene. The sun, as they almost simultaneously issued from their rooms, had not yet risen over the eastern shoulder of the hill on whose slope their house stood. The braes around, as the Scotch would call them, lay in shadow, and sprinkled with cool dews. But far away they could see the tops of the mountains bright with the sunshine, and the wide woodlands illumined like a sea by it. The lake below lay partly in shadow, and partly dazzling in radiance, and the smoke was curling up greyly from the huts at the stockyard or village, as it might be termed, at the right-hand corner of the lake. They could see two or three large flocks proceeding in different

directions from it, appearing to roll over the plain like a white mist, followed by the shepherds, and accompanied by their dogs, whose gladsome barking reached them clearly. Large flocks of wild-fowl were travelling towards the lake from their different nocturnal feeding-places, and ever and anon they could see the flash of the water as they dashed down into it. Below to the right extended that magnificent prairie whose golden-hued surface was now sobered down by the absence of the sun, and around stood the primeval forest, dark and solemn.

From this splendid prospect the delighted group turned to take a more near survey of their dwelling. A sort of natural terrace had been seized upon for the standing of the house. In front this level left ample space for walking, and this was occupied by grass, and the outskirts of it with beds of mingled shrubs and flowers. The hill then descended at its regular declination, and a considerable piece of ground was enclosed as a vineyard by a hedge of cytissus, looking most agreeable to the eye, with its light green foliage and yellow racimes of flowers. The vineyard was descended by a sort of broad steps, three or four feet wide each; and the vines occupied terraces, all neatly stocked and trimmed as by a French or German vinedresser. At the bottom was a broad

grass walk, at each end of which was placed a bench, overshadowed by the silvery grey foliage of quince trees richly hung with young fruit.

As the party returned towards the house they were again struck by the fitness of the building, which, while it was capacious and handsome, certainly was Australian, and not English. It was but of one storey, yet tolerably high, and the end rooms had broad bay windows, as if to catch every possible portion of the noble view they commanded. That open colonnade, with its shingled roof and deep eaves, and its clear, straight, and beautifully cylindric stems, white and smooth as marble, stood out well against the court, lying deep in shadow. An archway at the back of the court led them into a sort of back court or yard, having on each side sheds under which horses and carriages could stand occasionally, though the true place for such things was down at the huts. Separated by a light pallisade from this yard appeared a young orchard, extending some distance up the hill, in which not only many kinds of European apples, pears, and plums were flourishing, but peaches, nectarines, and apricots, as standard trees, showed the most vigorous growth, and were amazingly hung with green fruit. "Here," said Aunt Judith, "is promise indeed for autumn,

Why, what preserving there will be! I hope the sugar wo n't fail."

"Well, I hope not," said Mr. Fitzpatrick. "I think there is a ton coming just now, and perhaps that may serve your conservatory passion, Judy."

"Well, perhaps it may," said Aunt Judith; "but really, if we eat, and preserve, and bake, and do all sorts of things with these peaches and apricots, I do n't see the end of them, except we do as the Americans, feed the pigs on them. But Demby and Gremby, you 'll help us all you can, wo n't you?"

Demby and Gremby promised most merrily; and it may be as well to let the reader know that the personages thus addressed were no other than Charles and Georgina. Our friends were a family who, in their familiar intercourse amongst themselves, were greatly given to dubbing each other with nicknames, and not an individual amongst them but had one. Aunt Judith was very naturally called Judy, and as Mrs. Fitzpatrick and she were almost inseparable, they were soon named Punch and Judy; and Aunt Judith, being once pestered by the two children for some of her preserves and marmalades, told them they were as bad as Demby and Gremby, two very troublesome people of their acquaintance;

and Demby and Gremby were voted by acclamation as their pet titles. There wanted but a by-name for the paterfamilias, and that soon was Nimrod, from his hunting habits, and cut down by degrees to Nim.

"Oh, mercy on us! what have we here?" shrieked Aunt Judith; and at the same moment, half galloping, half flying, two stupendous birds, whose heads, set on long necks, seemed quite as high as Aunt Judith's, and, opening enormously long beaks, and making the most uncouth cries, came rushing upon them, spreading and flapping their wings with an expansion enough to enclose the whole party.

"Ha! ha! my old fellows! ha! ha! Gog and Magog!" said Charles, catching the gigantic birds each by the neck, and rubbing their long beaks together. "Ha! ha! old fellows! Why, Judy, these are the native companions I told you of. They won't hurt you. They are as gentle and as good as Desdemona herself. They only want to make your acquaintance."

The ladies had shrunk together in alarm at this sudden onset, but they now recovered their composure, and admired the noble birds. They were of the crane species, with bodies in which black, azure, and grey prevailed, and on the back part of their heads they

had a bright crimson patch like a cap. They followed the party with their long, active legs, and every now and then made a leap and a flap of their large wings, as in delight. You might see that they would soon be great favourites, especially with Aunt Judith.

There was now a call to breakfast, and the birds followed them, and took their stations under the breakfast-room window, where, evidently, they had been fed. "Oh! let me have some bread; I must feed the brave Gog and Magog," said Aunt Judith; but, on opening the window, she started back in amazement. "La! what is that? Those are not the birds!" Instead of the long-beaked companions, there stood two still larger creatures, with small heads, short beaks, but very large dark, intelligent eyes, and broad backs clothed with dark, lustrous feathers. Charles burst into hearty laughter at Aunt Judith's wonder; for, as Aunt Judith entered the house, he had enticed Gog and Magog into the hall, and shut them in, while he ran and lured these superb creatures with a piece of bread from the other side of the house.

"Oh! beautiful, beautiful things!" exclaimed Georgina. "Why, they are ostriches!"

"Emus, Geordy, emus, Australian cassuaries!" said Charles. "Are they not glorious fellows?"

The whole party were in raptures with the possession of these grand fowls of the Australian wilderness, and showered out a plentiful supply of bread for them.

"If the companions are Gog and Magog," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, "pray what are these?"

"Oh! these are Brob and Naga; that is, Brobdignag and Brobignaga," said Charles; "but you will find them always about; so now let us have some breakfast."

At breakfast Charles told the ladies that they must make a visit with him down to the huts; there they would see a plentiful family of fowls, ducks, geese, turkeys, and pea-fowls. He wanted to show them the huts and their inhabitants, Purdy the hut-keeper, and Barks the drayman, and their wives, and the great wool-shed, and the great kitchen garden down by the creek, and a near view of the lake with all its wild ducks, geese, teal, widgeon, ibises, shags, and black swans.

"Black swans!"

"Yes, black swans, plenty of them; and in the plains wild turkeys, and in abundance." Charles was running on in delight about all the game, kangaroos in the hills, and wombats, and a world of birds, when a thundering succession of cracking

whips and shouting men announced that the drays had mounted the hill, and the goods were arrived. Out rushed the whole party, and breakfast was left unfinished.

We may imagine the bustle and the pleasure of many days to come — the unloading and unpacking of furniture. There was soon a perfect confusion on the terrace of men and pieces of furniture, and mats, and cords, and straw which had enveloped them; of great chests of linen, and books, and china, and all sorts of things. Then there was a great unrolling and laying down and fitting of carpets, and carrying of furniture, and admiring it, piece after piece, as each took its place. The room in which they had breakfasted was fitted up half as library, half as drawing-room, and the corresponding room in the other wing as the principal drawing-room; so that they could use each as it was coolest from the absence of the morning or evening sun upon it. Behind the library lay the dining-room, with a cross passage between them opening out into a broad verandah on the east side of the house, affording a pleasant shade from many hours of forenoon sun. Under the shingle roof of this verandah were clustered scores of nests of swallows, stuck compactly side by side, and each having a projecting circular

entrance like the neck of a bottle. Aunt Judith contemplated this populous swallow city with vast delight, especially as she could watch their proceedings from the library window, though they soon found out that she was no enemy to them, and came flying in and out just as freely when she sat in the verandah.

But we must not stay talking about swallows while all the furniture has to be got in. In the west wing, but backward in the court, was a large store-room, into which the numerous packages, and bags, and tubs of stores were carried, to be arranged at leisure. All the best rooms were on the ground floor, as there was no other floor; and therefore, after all, there was not too much room in the house for the family and occasional visitors. But there was a large room adjoining the store-room which after-experience occasioned them to call the barracks. This was fitted up as a smoking-room; and there were arranged all the guns and apparatus of the chase, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, bullet-moulds, wad-cutters, and all sorts of implements for cleaning and rectifying these arms, as well as a good supply of ammunition under lock and key. This room, however, no long time demonstrated, was required as a general sleeping-room for gentlemen visitors, who

could not be accommodated with separate apartments; and here at any time a whole array of folding iron bedsteads, with mattresses and requisite bedclothes, could be carried in at shortest notice.

In a few days the house at Tallangetta displayed an internal beauty and richness, if not splendour, which certainly no squatting station in the colony could at all approach. Handsome cabinets and wardrobes, tasteful chairs, tables, cheval and pier-glasses, a superb collection of books, no inconsiderable number of fine engravings, and several excellent though small pictures on the walls, with all sorts of drawing-room and other room embellishments, curtains and sofas, presented a scene which would have been termed elegant in a country residence in England, and certainly stood quite *sui generis* in the Australian bush.

Any one seeing the completeness of this house internally, and the grandeur of the scene without, the resources for sport through wood and plain, river and lake, and the almost boundless nature of the estate, stocked with sheep, cattle, and horses, would have found it difficult to conceive that any man of healthy tastes could desire anything more or regret anything different. But the Fitzpatricks had in their own bosoms cruel remembrances and the

consciousness of rude and wrenching privations of property, and environments become to them as part and parcel of their existence. Yet even they, when they looked round them, could not but feel a sensible pleasure and pride in their present abode and estate, and a new spirit of enjoyment evidently took possession of them.

Abner and Peggy Wilks were located down at the huts. Abner was to resume his old employment as gardener, and Peggy as laundry woman. They had a comfortable slab hut in the garden, which was ample, and abounding with growing crops of all kinds of vegetables, pumpkins in numerous variety, melons and watermelons, with abundance of fig, and medlar and quince trees, cherries, loquots, quondongs, gooseberry, strawberry, and raspberry trees, as fine as any garden could show, including sundry productions which Abner surveyed with wondering queries in his own mind what they could be intended for. Purdy the hut-keeper, and Barks the drayman,—especially the latter, whose bullock-driving services were only now and then required,—were to help Abner in digging and hoeing when necessary; and their wives were to equally assist Peggy in the laundry labours. There was an excellent and spacious wooden laundry just outside the garden, and capital drying-ground. The water

of the lake was of that soft, detergent quality, that the washing was done with singular ease, and the sun there made still more expeditious work of the drying.

A grand discovery that the Wilkses, the Purdys, and the Barkses were all from the neighbouring counties of Derby and Nottingham, in which latter shire the Fitzpatricks had had an estate, created a great league amongst these worthies, and a common zeal in serving their employers, then a too rare circumstance.

The settling down in the house being complete, one morning after breakfast the whole family set out down to the huts, for a regular survey of this wooden hamlet. It was a curious-looking place to eyes new to the colony. A good half dozen of wooden huts, roofed in with huge sheets of stringy bark, and some of these roofs secured by stout poles lashed down upon them, stood here and there in most independent defiance of plan. Each of these had a broad, low chimney, tapering considerably upwards, and from several of which rose actively-aspiring smoke. Small windows peeped out of them, generally two, like two little eyes out of a heavy head. Besides these huts there were wooden erections of greater extent, which turned out to be stables and cowsheds, and one very large building, evidently erected with more care, and

with much greater symmetry, though only consisting of one immense quadrangle. Its walls, however, were of clapboard, so as to prevent the entrance of driving rain, and its roof of compact shingles. This was the wool-shed, a most important item in the buildings of a station. Here there was a pallisadoed enclosure, into which the sheep were brought at shearing time, or at any other time, to examine and dress them for foot-rot or scab. There was a capacious apartment at the end opening into this enclosure, where the shearers clipped the sheep, and then the large wool-shed or warehouse itself, in which the wool was pressed into huge canvass bags by a hydraulic press, and piled up till conveyed away down to Melbourne for shipment.

The whole of this building was floored with stout planks raised on sleepers, and with sufficient interstices to admit plenty of air, and the space under this floor was a grand retreat of wild cats, as Club very speedily discovered, and grew outrageous to be at them. Whenever Charles was desirous of a good wild cat hunt, he had only to bring hither Club, and Purdy, and Barks, and taking up a plank here and there, all of which were loose, there was instantly a grand rush of those spotted and bushy-tailed creatures from the building on all sides. But that in

after days; at present the party were too much interested in their visits to the huts. They found them very simple affairs, with mud floors and huge wide fire-places, the most rudimental chairs and tables, and just an extra room for sleeping in. There was Jack Barks, a tall, powerful fellow, in a pair of linen trowsers of a stupendously large check pattern, and long hair hanging from beneath his cabbage-tree hat; and Sam Purdy the hutkeeper, who prepared the meals and kept in order the huts of two shepherds who brought their flocks nightly to the head station, a lean, brown-complexioned fellow, with a treble voice, and closely-cropped dark brown hair. Barks seemed a bold, jovial, off-hand sort of fellow, with considerable of the dare-devil and rhodomontade in him; and Purdy had a twinkle in his eye which bespoke no little sly humour and love of fun. Their wives and children we may speak of more hereafter. The exploring party went on to the overseer's hut, which was much larger, and contained no less than four rooms; for there came numbers of people travelling to and fro, and freely took up their quarters for the night, or longer if it pleased them, for there were no inns, and everybody gave and took in this way on their journeys through the bush. Mr. David Rannock the overseer, a grave,

middle-aged Scotchman, unmarried, and devoted to business, was not there, for he was constantly riding to the different outlying huts of the shepherds and stockmen; but there was the cook, a queer sort of Irishman, Dennis O'Foggaty, and a great number of dogs, chiefly of the colly species, lying about. There were tribes of fowls of all kinds, and clouds of pigeons, all objects of plenty and agreeable cares that delighted Aunt Judith.

But what called forth more admiration almost than anything else was a pair of magnificent kangaroo dogs; that is, Highland staghounds naturalised in this country, and invaluable in the chase after the kangaroo. Mr. Fitzpatrick and Charles promised themselves many a gallop after these superb creatures, these gigantic greyhounds, through the woods; and horses, too, there were in the paddocks at hand to supply any number of equestrians. There were, indeed, hundreds running wild on the estate, as fine creatures as ever carried tails.

From the huts they took their way to the oat and barley paddocks, where fine green crops were growing, strolled under the trees of the immense grass paddock, where fed the milch cows and horses, and then directed their course to the margin of the lake. From the smooth, down-like swells on the banks of

this fine sheet of water they could clearly see on the short turf of the plains at a considerable distance numbers of the wild turkeys or rather bustards of the country, which, however, are difficult to approach. Large flocks of wild ducks of different kinds rose up and removed far away on the waters; and here and there, but at a safe distance, the native black swans seemed to drift carelessly before the breeze, while the large snowy pelican flew along the reedy shores with strange clanging sounds, with a lustrous whiteness in the bright sunshine.

A boat lay moored to a post; Barks said there were three on the lake, and he asked whether he should give them a pull out, but they deferred that pleasure to another day, and they now took their way homewards, highly satisfied with what they had seen; the kangaroo hounds showing a desire to follow them, but Barks called them back, saying they were yet new to the place, and therefore not safe company for the emus. A light wooden foot-bridge led them across the creek where it issued from the lake; all carriages and cattle passing through the creek itself by a shallow ford.

Such was the first survey of our settlers of the portion of their new domain immediately under their eye, and from day to day they extended their re-

searches with augmenting avidity. At one time they took a leisurely stroll up the hill; saw with increased amazement the still vaster views thence of woods and distant mountains. On the open slopes they lingered with pleasure, examining the various flowers, or listening to the wind singing wildly in the long, wiry tresses of the shiacks. On the hills themselves they found one unbroken forest running in varied swells and valleys, but all solitary and woodland, where prostrate trees lay in various stages of decay, where the kangaroo rat and the bandicoot rushed away from beneath some fallen log or protecting thicket, and parrots and paroquets glanced and twittered on the tree-tops, or the noisy wattle-bird cried, "Karaka-rock!"

At other times Charles and Georgina, often accompanied by their father and the kangaroo hounds, and the indefatigable Club, who would not be left behind, finding continual objects of chase in the woods, made long rides, exploring the bearings of the neighbourhood, sometimes starting a grand boomah, or great red kangaroo, and dashing after the dogs till they would have been inevitably lost in the trackless waste but for the sure instinct of their horses and hounds.

The whole family soon found that there was no lack

of pleasant employment in this, as they had feared, solitary place. They were yet utter strangers; they knew not a soul of their neighbours; there was no daily paper arriving by railroad mail, bringing every morning from London all the doings of the world. There were no neighbouring towns or villages; the very hills and valleys, for the most part, had no names yet; but the ladies had their books, their music, their needlework, and their garden. There was always something for them to attend to within or without. Barks and Purdy brought in two broods of young paroquets, the green leeks, and the lovely speckled budgregores, which afforded Aunt Judith and Georgina especial pleasure to feed and watch in their large cages under the verandah. Seeing that this gave great pleasure, they soon also brought in two or three of the strange animals, half pig, half bear in appearance, which live in huge burrows in the woods, the wombats. These they placed within an enclosure in the orchard, where they soon made burrows to their hearts' content, and grew very tame; and not long after they added to this native menagerie a couple of uncouth animals called sun-bears, which they placed in wooden cages or kennels on the branch of a great tree, and fed upon the leaves of the pepper-mint gum. All these things, with visits down to

the huts, the women and children there, and the fowls and garden, filled up wonderfully their time, and which, indeed, was not long left so free from human visits as they expected.

As for Charles and his father, they were enthusiastic sportsmen, and they found Barks and Purdy as eager as themselves in this chase whenever they were at liberty to accompany them. The lake and creek gave them the most exciting exercise in pursuit of the wild-fowl, for, from the scarcity of cover, they were not approachable except by the nicest stratagem and caution. Sometimes they might be seen creeping on all fours, or progressing like serpents at their full length on the ground, by means of their hands, behind some swell or bank, so as to get a fair shot at their game, or they were cautiously drifting with the wind over Purrumbang, the lake, with a thicket of boughs concealing them in the boat till they were fairly in the midst of the flocks of geese, ducks, or black swans; at others they were stalking, under cover of their horses' shoulders, across the deep, grassy prairies, in order to come near the wild turkeys, which were often wild indeed, and wonderfully cautious of the approach of man. Charles delighted, too, in nothing more than in driving occasionally with the buoyant-hearted and talkative Barks, on his

weekly rounds to carry the rations to the different shepherds' huts. These lay some of them many miles distant in the unpeopled woods; and Barks had endless stories of bushrangers and blacks in past days, when they were hostile and made fierce attacks on the squatters and travellers. There were lovely creeks, and pools, and forest solitudes, where there were extraordinary game, or extraordinary fish, or stupendous trees, and other wonders which he had to show,—the fern-tree, the grass-tree, the fragrant myal wood, or the wild quondong fruit. Their guns were constantly in requisition to fetch down a bronze-wing, or secure a platypus; and as they lit their fire on some pleasant stream-bank and eat their dinner, or as they sate and chatted with the solitary shepherd in his hut, Charles felt a fast growing attachment to this species of free, fresh, and primitive existence. It is one which seizes forcibly on the imagination of youth, so forcibly that at no period and in no country have the hunting races been ever induced to abandon their limitless haunts for the more brilliant or more boasted attractions of towns. How much more fascinating must the free range of untrodden nature, the solemn wood, the airy mountain, the widely rolling lake, and the sounding shore, with all their living things, become to those who carry with them all the domestic and intellectual resources of civilised life!

CHAP. III.

NEIGHBOURS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the generally auspicious appearance of affairs on the station at Tallangetta, yet, as things are never wholly right anywhere in this world, so neither were they there. You cannot transplant full-grown people any more than full-grown trees, and make them take to the new ground at once. It happened, therefore, that both at the house and at the huts on the same evening conversations were going on that betrayed the fact that certain persons had not yet reached that *terra incognita*,—heaven upon earth.

Peggy Wilks and her husband had, indeed, discovered a great deal more than they had rational reason to expect in their new world; they had not only a comfortable hut, and plenty to do, and good pay, but they had immediate neighbours out of their own old neighbourhood in England. The Barkses and the Purdys knew all and every thing and person that they knew at home, and often they spent very

delightful hours in talking all those old familiar matters over. In an evening, when all work was done, and the cool night air made a little fire pleasant, they would assemble in each other's huts, and have a most refreshing gossip. Any one who has ever entered a country inn in England, when the villagers are congregated there at the regular levee of the host within the large settee before the winter fire, will have long ago discovered how all the affairs of the gentry in the neighbourhood are there canvassed and discussed most minutely. There is not a family, however high or great, whose most intimate concerns are not as thoroughly known to the smith, and wheelwright, and gamekeeper, and nine host himself, as they are to the families and persons treated of. There you hear who and what they are in all their family branches and ancestry; how this great man made his fortune, and how that great man lost it; how this estate came to be bought and sold; what it is worth to a farthing; what mortgages are upon it; what flaws there are in the title; and what flaws in the pedigree and parentage of the possessors. Many a nod and wink, and most grave and knowing look, reveal mysteries of mishaps in people who lift their heads very high, and ill-founded claims to legitimacy if the truth was known to the world as it is to these

village magi. Every run to Gretna Green is again galloped over, with all its particulars;—how Sir Thomas overtook his daughter, and she was smuggled again out of a chamber window while the old gentleman was overtaken himself by his after dinner nap, as he sat with the key of her chamber door in his pocket. How Squire Grub had grown out of a dishonest steward into a right honourable gentleman; how Squire Canter had turned himself out of a land surveyor into a land proprietor, by running off with old Slowman's only daughter; how this lord's grandfather was a grocer, and that lord's father was a clever mixer of physic, if the "parson as is gone" was to be believed about a certain death-bed. There you could learn why such a fair estate was forsaken; why that fine old hall was falling to ruin; who it was that walked in the great picture-gallery at Lonesome Lodge, and that rung the only bell at midnight in Drearywood Chapel. All this you could learn, with the exact dates, names, places, and causes, and receive totally new ideas on such fractions of aristocratic society as you happened to know. Little do the great families in the country think how they and their totality are dissected, seen through, and weighed out in parcels, and labelled with very different names and characters to those which they

felicitate themselves on possessing; and little are the reverential bows and touching of hats as they pass likely to let them know anything of this; or how John the groom, or Prim the valet, or Bombazina the lady's maid, carry out and carefully sow in the very thirsty and absorbent minds of the villagers all the mixed seed of this knowledge, this grotesque medley of truth and romance.

Well, a world of such talk enlivened the evenings of the huts at Tallangetta, where it could do little harm to the unconscious subjects of it at the other end of this or other worlds. There was nothing that could be started that Purdy, in particular, did not know everything and more than that about it. Mention a man, no matter who,—"Oh, yes! he knew him,—who his father was, his mother, his grandmother; how he came to be lame, how he jumped into his present birth." Name a place, at once he knew all about the squire and the rector, and how he came to get the living by taking the fancy of a certain lady at Bath, and all about the duel in which there was trickery in the weapons, and of course murder, nothing else. He knew where that child was born that certain people declared never was born; where it was carried to in a butter maund, and who it was now, though that child that ought to

have been a duke knew nothing of this, and was only a coal merchant. Peggy Wilks and Hannah Barks had no lack of such histories by the end, and no sooner was this end out than Purdy would seize it, and pull it out like a man at a fair pulling out whole yards of ribbons from his throat, and illustrate and verify every point of it.

Could there be any more charming luck than to have dropped into such a congenial society, and to enjoy such precious evenings at home? Yet Peggy Wilks was not contented. She was an odd woman was Peggy. She liked to grumble; she could not live without it, and yet she hated to hear anybody else grumble. "What are the thankless folks werritting about?" she was sure to say, if they were repining at anything. "Have n't they enough to be thankful for? Is n't it shameful, now, to hear them going on so, and so much as they 've had done for them? But there 's no thanks nor gratitude in this world: the more a body does, the more they 're pecked at. I hate your black-hearted, double-faced, uncontented gentry, I do!"

Yet Peggy was not altogether contented herself. She had plenty, "thank the Lord for it." She had health, "thank Goodness for that too." Abner had lost his rheumatiz, "saints be praised!" — and had

an uncommon fine garden to rule in. And as for the family, Peggy would really have gone through fire and water for them all and sundry; but yet she liked to grumble now and then at them herself, mind; nobody else was to do it, at the peril of her fiercest anger. But the things which chafed Peggy here were the heat and the "varmint."

"Drat these flies!" she would say, as Abner came in at noon to his dinner. "I think I'll e'en gie up cooking, and you may bring us raw lettices and ingins to our bread. What with the heat, — we might just as well live in an oven, — and what with these lingons of outrageousest flies, I tell thee what, Abner, my life's a plague to me. There's the mutton that was killed just an hour sin, it's full of maggots half an inch long, it swarms wi 'em."

"No matter for that," said Abner, "the meat is sweet enough."

"Sweet enough, is it? And creeping with maggots? Sweet enough for them as cares nothing for what they swallow. Sweet enough for you, perhaps."

"For anybody," says Abner; "just scrape them off, and pop the steaks into the frying-pan."

"Ay, just and just, man; that is soon said; but just you now try it yourself, and see how you'll hold the pan and fry with twenty thousand flies darting

at your eyes, nose, and mouth at once, and never a hand at liberty to fight with 'em."

"But I never do fight 'em," said Abner.

"Oh lors, no! that's true," retorted Peggy; "you let them crawl all over your face, and fill your very eye-holes, till they are black as my shoe, with the creeping, crawling varmint — ugh! it makes my flesh creep to see it."

"But my flesh does n't creep," said Abner.

"No, it only should," exclaimed Peggy, indignantly; "but you've no more feeling in your skin than a rhinoceros. Your skin is just leather. Stringy bark is more of a skin by half. I would n't own such a skin, I would n't. And to-day I've done nothing but get tanged (stung) with those nasty prismires as is crawling over every mander of thing. Sets my clothes-basket on the grass, jump! comes something, and tang! goes something into my hand, just like a needle. Leans my hand in my fright against a tree, tang! goes another villain in my neck. Shakes my neckhandkerchief, and, Lord above us! jumps half a score of the nasty stinging wretches down my back. Runs in to pull off my clothes, the little devils tanging and tormenting all the way, and just as I sits down on the bed there I sees a hugous ugly sentrypid curled up with all its legs in my best

cap. Out I throws him into the garden, and runs out to stamp on him, and there he isn't to be found, the filthy reptile; but I potters amongst the wood heap, and stead of him nearly sets my thumb on a horrid scorpion! Sky above us! who's safe here a blessed minute?"

"Why, you, Peggy," said Abner, smiling; "you're safe enough yet."

"Safe enough, am I? And that's all you care for a good wife like me, is it? But you mayn't just have me, one of these days. Safe, am I? That's because you don't know nothing about it. Safe, am I? And you'd ha' said so if you had been down at the creek when I went for a bucket o' water to-day. Sets down my bucket, and is just going to swing it into the water by the rope, and flop! goes something into the water; and what was it? Just a great, ugly, deadly, omfabulous, venomous snake, as black as black can be, and above a yard long. My heart jumped into my mouth, and I should have given such a screech, but I lost my voice, and I was just tumbling into the water in my start, only my fright made me turn and run. Let the monster have just bitten me, as was a narrow miss, and then I should have been safe enough, you may take my word for it."

This was at noon. At evening, when Abner came in, he found Peggy cleaned up, with her bettermost gownd on, as she called it, and sitting at the tea-table waiting for him. "All safe yet, Peggy?" said Abner, rather daringly. "No more flies, ants, snakes, or triantelopes?"

"Get your tea, man," said Peggy, "and be thankful that nothing hurts you; only that you don't know summer from winter, nor spring from autumn. It is a pretty country where they call December June, and June December."

"But they don't," said Abner.

"Do n't they?" said Peggy. "Then why do you set your potatoes in September, and gather your gooseberries in January? I thought you were cracking your poor skull to know one time from another, and thought that the months had all run backwards, and that your north aspect for sun, and south aspect for shade, rather bothered you."

"Well, they did," said Abner, "but I 've found a remedy for that. I 've just altered all the names in my 'Gardener's Calendar' with a pen, and written June for December, and April for October, and so on; and all comes as clever as a pod after a pea-blossom. I never stop to think about it now; autumn's autumn, and spring's spring again, as I 've written it."

"Well, then, as you're so sharp," said Peggy, "I wish you'd just turn the world round as you've turned the seasons, and set us down at Thrumpton again, out of reach of these flies and sentrypids. I wonder what we must be doing to come to such a country as this, just to please a parcel of broken-down gentry."

"Broken-down gentry!" said Abner; "pray who may they be? I've followed none, though I would have done it, had it been so. But you don't call Sir Thomas a broken-down gentleman, I hope? You don't call an estate like this a broken-down man's estate, I hope?"

"Who are you setting up, you simpleton?" said Peggy. "Who are you Sir Thomasing? I don't know any such man; and if these here aren't broken-down gentry, who is? If they aren't, man, where's Thrumpton Hall and Heathercote Hall? And what's that Sir Patrick doing there, as grand as my lord? More fools we for coming all this way after nothing but flies and water-snakes!"

Abner sat down to his tea, stirred his cup with a very upright spoon, which seemed to grind surlily against the bottom, and was silent, as if in anger. But he knew his cue; and all at once taking a large slice of brown bread and butter, and doubling it up,

he said, "Well, Peggy, it is a pitty we've come, just as you say, to please a parcel of broken-down gentry; but I thought nothing would stop you, or I could have staid well enough. Sir Patrick offered me high wages."

Peggy looked fire and daggers.

"And you'd have been mean enough to have taken the dirty money of that dirty, designing, thieving body, that has dropped himself like a cuckoo into another's nest? Well, that becomes you now, it does; but," added Peggy, growing very red, "I'd ha' cut off my hand first before I'd ha' moved a knuckle-bone for such a wretch! An upstart, a base impostor, a —— !"

"Gentlemen of property, however," said Abner, taking another slice of bread and butter, "and not a broken-down gentry."

"Who are you calling broken-down gentry?" said Peggy, firing up.

"Who?" said Abner; "why, the same that you called so."

"Well, and if I called them so, have not I a right to call them so? I who saw them married, and nursed the children, and the blessed boy that died, and helped to cheer them up when they were in trouble. I've a right, if anybody has; I should

think so! And when I say it, I do n't mean it; its only because I feel savage innerly, and must say something; and when I know that I mean no harm, why there 's no harm in it; but as to you, Abner, oh, fie! fie on you, to foul your lips with such words! I 'd rather sew them up, I would!"

Abner very gravely said he gave in, as he had done scores of times before, and said Peggy was quite right. He admired her spirit, and all the time he laughed in his sleeve and enjoyed the fun.

Up at the house, just as this dialogue was taking place, and they knowing nothing of it of course, Mr. Fitzpatrick, after a long, solitary ride over the plains, threw himself on the sofa after dinner, and said, "After all, this is rather a slow affair, this bush life. If one had but a pleasant neighbour or two to exchange a word with now and then, we might do."

"Neighbours!" said Aunt Judith. "But where are we to look for them?"

"Well, there are such people; but they do n't seem very neighbourly," said Mr. Fitzpatrick. "There is Captain Ponceford down the valley on the Monalka, over our creek, not more than five miles off; but you see nothing of him."

"Do n't you know why, Nim?" said Charles.

"No, Demby," replied his father.

"It is because he has been in Melbourne till yesterday; and now they are beginning sheep-washing and shearing, and I guess you won't see many squatters till that is over."

"Well, no," added his father; "and as we are going to begin too, we shall not have much visiting time, I expect."

"But," said Charles, "I have made out that we have no less than four families of neighbours within a circle of fifteen or twenty miles. There are the Metcalfes on the Campaspe, and the Quarriers on the Goulburn; Captain Ponceford just below here."

"Just below!" said Georgina, laughing. "Five miles off!"

"Yes, just below, Gremby," continued Charles; "and there is Dr. Woolstan's at Mount Corballa, over the hills there."

"What! is he a medical man?" asked Aunt Judith. "That is good hearing, if he be a clever man."

"A very clever man, they tell me," said Charles, "and only seventeen miles off!"

"For our comfort," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, laughing, "we need not be dead above once or twice over before we could have him, if he did not happen to be making a medical visit away on the Billebong, or the

Yanko over the Murray, some hundred or two of miles in the other direction."

All laughed, and yet said it was no laughing matter; and from that day for a month the whole place was astir with sheep-washing, shearing, and packing of wool. The gentlemen were as busy and as interested in it as if it was the most delightful occupation in the world, and no more was thought of want of company. Then, one day, as they were just sitting at their noon dinner, they saw a stoutish man, with a full, ruddy face, ride up at a brisk rate into the court, and presently he was announced as Mr. Quarrier. Without waiting to be invited in, the squatter walked in with as brisk a pace as he had ridden up, and with a face full of smiles he passed from one person to another in a quick, familiar style, shook both ladies and gentlemen heartily by the hand, bade them welcome to the bush, apologised for not being able to call before, but pleaded business, and said he supposed they had found there was no great ceremony used in the bush, but he hoped they would not be long before they discovered much warm-heartedness.

Scarcely waiting for invitation, he seated himself at table and fell into the use of his knife and fork as naturally as possible; congratulated the ladies on

their fine situation, only feared they found it a bore to get water up from the lake so far; congratulated Mr. Fitzpatrick on the good clip and good price of wool; hoped they had not much grass seed in their fleeces.

"Grass seeds in wool!" said Aunt Judith.

Mr. Quarrier laughed loud and heartily. "Ah! I am glad, ma'am, to hear you ask that, for it shows you have not got them. Depend upon it, you would have heard of them if they had been on the run. Your washers and shearers would have cursed them cordially as they ran into their fingers. Why, ma'am, they are sharp as needles, and run through the sheep-skins as they would through a pat of butter."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the ladies. But Mr. Quarrier went on to ask Mr. Fitzpatrick how they were for scab and foot-rot; said he heard there was catarrh in the Upper Goulburn, and then turning suddenly to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, said Mrs. Quarrier and her mother and the girls meant to drive over and see them soon; pulled out his watch just as the cloth was drawn; said he would just take a cigar and a glass of toddy while his horse ate a little corn, and would be off, for he must be at home by daylight.

With that he jumped up and went out to see his

horse, came in, and sate with Mr. Fitzpatrick and Charles as he smoked his cigar; talked at a wonderful rate of the colony, the squatting interests, the abominable attempts of the radicals in Melbourne to invade their rights; drew out a long printed memorial that he had sent to the home government on the subject; hoped Mr. Fitzpatrick would stand up for the poor squatters and the great wool trade; and then, hurrying to say good bye to the ladies, was seen cantering off down the very steepest of the hills, splashing through the water of the creek, stopping a moment to shake hands with Mr. Rannock the overseer at the door of his hut, and then off again at full speed into the woods.

"Do you call that a squatter?" said Aunt Judith, with a droll expression of countenance, as they saw Mr. Quarrier vanish into the bush. "I should call him a rusher, a careerer; I feel exactly as if a whirlwind or a torrent had gone through the house, don't you? Are those your squatters, your quiet men of the woods, whose name gives one an idea of people sitting in profoundest composure like hares on their forms? Why, they are all mercury and locomotion! What in the world can have made them so rapid, fierce, fidgety, and full of bustle? Bless me! it upsets all my notions. I expected nothing in a hurry but a frightened kangaroo,

or a bush fire. Ah! that's it, Mr. Quarrier is a bush fire."

"But, Judy, you are judging a whole race by the very first specimen," said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

"So you are, Judy," said Charles. "Neither Weir nor Wallthorpe are at all like this Mr. Quarrier."

"Why, who are they? Who are Weir and Wallthorpe, Demby?" asked all the family at once.

"They are the overseers of Captain Ponceford," said Charles; "I met them down the creek the other day, and two very nice young fellows they seemed."

"There now," said Mr. Fitzpatrick; "how these young fellows do find one another out! But who comes here?"

A lady and gentleman rode at the same moment into the court. They were young, and in dress and bearing would not have been distinguished from any of the aristocratic class of England.

"Captain and Mrs. Ponceford," said the servant. The persons announced entered. The captain was a tall, thin, gentlemanly-looking man with a moustache, and wearing a riding suit of grey merino. There was a quiet seriousness in his manner, accompanied by an expression that evinced good sense and a kindly disposition. Mrs. Ponceford was also tall, and remarkably handsome both in figure and face.

All thought that in her riding dress they had never seen a more graceful woman; but it was the cordial, happy, frank expression of her face that drew and wholly engrossed the attention of the spectators. It was soon learnt that Captain Ponceford had served in India, but had determined to settle here on account of his health, which failed there. He had gone to England and married the object of a long attachment. They were neither of them yet more than thirty, and had only two children of about seven and eight years old. All quickly felt that they should greatly like them. Captain Ponceford, in the quietest contrast to their late visitor, showed so much knowledge of the colony and its statistics, placed the life of a squatter in so pleasant a point of view, and Mrs. Ponceford spoke with so much heart and feeling of the beauties of the country round, of the pleasures that were to be found even in the bush, which she preferred infinitely to town life, and evinced such a natural, warm, affectionate interest about all the productions of the neighbourhood, animate and inanimate, as charmed every one. They mutually congratulated each other on becoming neighbours, and the Ponce-fords said they were to use that freedom, and ride over at any time without ceremony. Aunt Judith declared that it would be quite a luxury to come

to them, if it were only to ride over those golden prairies.

"Are they not glorious?" exclaimed Mrs. Ponceford. "But do you know what our vivacious neighbour Quarrier said when I first saw and expressed my admiration of them?—'Yes, madam, and the beauty of it is that the sheep are very fond of them, and will eat them all down when the grass gets scarce!'"

"A strange man, that, I should think," said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

"A good fellow," replied Captain Ponceford, "but too much of a fire-eater; too much excited about what are called squatters' rights, which, after all, must, between us, be limited by the public rights; but a well-educated and really warm-hearted man."

"And you must wait and see his family," said Mrs. Ponceford. "You will love Mrs. Quarrier, a gentle, good creature as ever lived, and a very fine woman, too; a superb woman, and a most favourable specimen of the native-born white population. And the children, such a family! I think there are eight or nine, running up as they stand in a row as regular as a flight of stairs, head above head, or, as you may say, step above step. I think you will say you never saw anywhere a more beautiful set of children, and

the homes of England can show a finer race of them than any homes in the world. Then there is old Mrs. Quarrier; but I must not tell you all; she will soon speak for herself, and when you hear her free and independent notions—the energetic old lady—you will wonder where Mr. Quarrier got his exclusive ones."

The visitors took their leave, but with such a lively feeling in their favour, that though it was getting towards evening, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Charles, and Georgina could not resist the pleasure of riding some distance with them. The sun was sinking over the vast woods; and as they rode on Captain and Mrs. Ponceford pointed out the most striking ranges of mountains, and named them, including the Buffalo mountains, the Plenty Ranges, Mounts Alexander and Korong, afterwards so famous. The whole family of Tallangetta were delighted at the discovery of such neighbours, luckily, far their nearest ones, and all sense of solitude fled away.

In a few days a couple of rather tall but very shy youths made their appearance at David Rannock's, and said they wanted him to go with them up to the great house, as they called it, for their father and mother were coming to spend the night there, and had sent them on before to become acquainted with

the young people of the family. They were Bell and Brady Metcalfe. It was in vain that Mr. Rannock told them that they needed no introduction from him, they would be made heartily welcome; they only blushed, shrugged their shoulders, said they knew the new-comers were very fine folks, and showed no disposition to move; so David Rannock at length walked up with them. The two blushing youths, looking very big and very awkward in their bush costume of jack-boots and short, coarse coatees with metal buttons, bowed stiffly to all round, seated themselves on chairs near the door, and smiled and said "yes" and "no" in reply to the words addressed to them, but appeared very little at their ease, and did not get out of a very uncomfortable silence, only blushing and smiling whenever they were addressed afresh. Charles, who perceived their embarrassment, said he would like to show them about the garden, and once out of the room they regained their nerves and faculties, and said their father and mother were coming, and asked Charles how he liked the bush, and very soon were in full and eloquent talk of great cod-fish in the Campaspe, and shooting of black swans and wild turkeys, and kangaroo hunting. They wonderfully admired the two kangaroo hounds at the

huts, and invited Charles to come and spend a fortnight with them.

Charles soon saw that they were two very good-natured fellows, and deep in all the mysteries of the bush, but totally unused to any society more distinguished than that of the squatters around them. They told him they were born in the bush, had had wonderful adventures in taking and fetching cattle from distant parts of the country; had only been to school a short time at Melbourne, for they hated the town, and soon came back; that they had had a tutor up there to read with them, but instead of teaching them anything they had taught him all sorts of things belonging to bush life, and that he had become desperately in love with it, and was now gone to the Edwards river as an overseer. "Ah! you'll like it, Mr. Fitzpatrick," they said. "You'll soon like it better than everything; you'll never want to go into those dry brick towns to be cooped up like rabbits in a hutch. Ah!" said Bell, "that's the life, to be up in the morning when the sun just reddens the tree tops, as if they were all roses and gold, get your breakfast, catch your horse, and away through the woods, the dews glittering, the peppermint-trees scenting all the air, the crows warbling, the jackasses laughing, the wattle-birds crying 'Tackamahac!' on

the honeysuckle-trees, and the kangaroo rats brushing off right and left as if their legs were of whalebone. Is n't that jolly? Away you go, through miles of woods, down deep valleys, up great hills, dashing through the deep rivers; my word, though, but I had a swim for it across the Goulburn the other day where it is twenty fathoms deep, and the stream was rushing round a bend like mad. But bonny Bess did it bravely. The blacks are coming here in a week or two from the Goulburn and the Campaspe, and all about. They'll play old Harry with the game, I can tell you; but it is best to be civil to them. You've noticed their ovens all about here, have n't you?"

"No; what are they?" asked Charles.

"Why, great mounds of wood cinders; charcoal, in fact."

"Oh! yes, yes!" said Charles. "I have often wondered what they were. They look like Druidical barrows at home."

"They are where the tribes used to congregate, and make their common fire and cook all their victuals while they staid. They never stay long in one place, for they soon eat up all the fish and game. But here they used to be very numerous; and this part of the country is famous for game, and so you

find hundreds of these old charcoal mounds, or ovens. It's very odd you do n't find them anywhere else for hundreds of miles round, and the natives now all cook at separate fires for each family."

While talking thus, they saw two gigs come driving up the hill, and the speaker, pausing, said: "And there comes the governor."

"What governor?" asked Charles.

"Oh, our governor, our worthy daddy," said Bell, "and mother; and I declare there comes the Doctor and Mrs. Woolstan."

The youths all hurried to receive the approaching guests, and the station of Tallangetta bade fair to lack no company for the night. We must, however, introduce our new acquaintance in a new chapter.

CHAP. IV.

WONDERFUL TIDINGS.

WHEN our new guests were duly introduced and had taken their places at the tea-table, which was just prepared for that agreeable *séance*, they presented as remarkable a variety as you could easily meet with in a far more populous region. Mr. Metcalfe was a quaint-looking, thin Scotchman, with sharp, well-defined features, and hair of grizzled black and grey. He was a man who had had great reverses and troubles in his time, which had given him a still and subdued manner, but had neither been able to acidify his temper, nor to prevent him recovering his social position and a good property. You were surprised, when you came to converse with him, to find what a much superior taste and amount of general information he possessed than you would expect in the bush, and in a man who had had to struggle his way up again out of deep and discouraging circumstances. But he had a great knowledge of books, and managed

to keep up an acquaintance with what was going on in Europe, and in literature in a remarkable degree.

Mrs. Metcalfe was a large woman, of a full and fresh-looking person, and with a countenance of much gravity and dignity, displaying unquestionable evidences of beauty not yet past, and of strong sense never more present. She was what is called a very commanding and imposing lady, and yet never was there a woman less disposed to impose in any sense, or to command. Nature did that for her, and for herself she was a truly kind-hearted woman, of the strongest sympathies, but having a high sense of the proprieties and moralities of life. The world gave her credit for having furnished the sagacity and spirit which reconstructed their fortunes, but she never on any occasion gave the least warrant to this opinion, but universally spoke of Mr. Metcalfe's plans and exertions, and self-merited success. On all occasions she sought her husband's views, and deferred to them before company in the most natural manner, which did not, however, convince very penetrating people, those who can see all the way through a millstone, and who let it be understood that it was all very well, but did not deceive them; it was quite right of Mrs. Metcalfe, and quite accordant with her depth of character, to maintain the honour of her

husband. One thing, however, was certain; there was no happier or more estimable couple in the colony. They were famed for their hospitality; Mr. Metcalfe being ready to aid the views of his neighbours in any possible way; and Mrs. Metcalfe for her tenderness in cases of illness or trouble, and for her intense love of her flower-garden.

Dr. and Mrs. Woolstan were a very different pair. The doctor was a leanish, tallish man, with an aquiline nose of considerable dimensions, a look of great simplicity and friendliness, and a voice at once homely and rather dialectic; but there was that about him which pronounced him very soon to be no ordinary character. The first thing which struck you in his conversation was a certain old-fashionedness. His words and tone carried you back to past days and country places, but this was very soon forgotten in the subjects which he was sure to bring into play. You were pleased with the pleasure which he discovered in the country; you were surprised at the feeling of poetry which flowed after his conversation; you were drawn by a primitiveness of faith and sentiment, mingled with a degree of real science which revealed themselves as he went on; and very soon you found him leading you forward to the discussion of social or intellectual questions which were bound up with

the progress of society and the profoundest interests of spiritual life. The doctor was a great mesmerist, and surprised the Tallangetta family by the most entire belief in it; for they had always entertained the settled idea that it was a piece of sheer humbug, and its advocates either dupes or charlatans. They were, therefore, astonished to see a medical man of mature years and great experience so coolly confessing to his faith in it. But he told them that he was open to conviction; it was only by such a disposition that science and philosophy had been enabled to triumph over ignorance and its shadow, prejudice, and to place us where we are.

But Mrs. Woolstan went further. Both she and the doctor were born and educated in the Society of Friends, and she was a mild, gentle-looking woman, very like a Friend still, of a placid and fair countenance, and very quiet in her manner, and she averred a belief in spiritual agencies and appearances with a calm frankness which amazed the Fitzpatricks.

"Why surely," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, "you don't believe in being able to communicate with spirits while we are in the body?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Woolstan, addressing her husband, "our friends here doubt of spiritual communications; would you object to endeavour to satisfy them?"

"By no means," replied the doctor, as speaking of a matter of course. "But all these things hang together by a natural series of affinities, and I had therefore better show you, first, a fact or two on the more physical and so more convincing side of this great question. They will demonstrate that there are powers lying on the very surface of nature too wonderful for belief if they were not actually seen. Come here Bell, my boy," he continued, addressing Bell Metcalfe; "let us see whether you or Mr. Fitzpatrick are the strongest."

Bell looked sheepish, and hung back. He was unwilling, from mere shyness, to exhibit himself before these superior strangers; but the doctor advanced to him, and seizing him by the arm, drew him into the middle of the room, the servant having just taken away the tea.

"Now," said the doctor, "you, Mr. Fitzpatrick, should be immensely stronger than this youth; you are twice his size; you are strongly knit, and your whole frame is solidified by mature years. Bell is slender, not yet fully grown, and therefore rather loosely hung; yet I will venture to say that he shall overcome all your strength in the trial which I shall institute."

"If he do," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, with an air

of self-confidence, "I will admit it to be most wonderful."

"Place your left hand, thus, behind his shoulder, and take his right hand in your right; hold his arm at full length, thus; and now see whether, you resisting his efforts, he can in this position bend his arm forward."

"That will very soon be settled, I think," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, holding Bell as desired, and the young man making the most determined efforts possible, but being totally unable to bend his arm in the least.

"As I said, doctor," observed Mr. Fitzpatrick, "that is very soon settled," smiling in triumph; "your stripling has not overcome me, as you promised."

"You are quite satisfied of that?" remarked the doctor.

"Why, every one must be satisfied of it," added Mr. Fitzpatrick.

"Now then," said the doctor, making some passes down the front of Bell's arm, which Mr. Fitzpatrick continued to hold out as in a vice, "try all your strength, sir, to keep his arm straight."

Mr. Fitzpatrick felt some new power now in Bell's arm which evidently astonished him. His face flushed, he put forth all his strength, but Bell bent forward

his arm with the utmost apparent ease till his fingers touched his breast. Mr. Fitzpatrick stood astonished; and the astonishment was universal in the members of his family.

"That is the most surprising thing," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "that I ever saw in the whole course of my life. That is wonderful! How can it be done?"

"Simply by that power of which we only yet know a little," said the doctor; "but that one fact should prove to you that there is no deception in it."

"Deception!" cried Mr. Fitzpatrick. "How can there be deception? How can this boy overpower all my force under one circumstance, and not under another?"

"Under precisely the same circumstances," added the doctor, "except in the addition of the mesmeric force in the second experiment. But, indeed, you might try the experiment between any parties that you pleased; between a giant and a dwarf, a giant and this slender maiden, your daughter."

"That is marvellous," said the astonished spectators. "And yet," said Brady Metcalfe, laughing, "you never could mesmerise me, doctor."

"No, that is true," replied the doctor; "the power is not to be exerted on every subject by any one operator; but really, Brady, I think I can master

you now. Here, take hold of that bit of paper." The doctor took up an envelope of a letter from a side-table. Brady held it in his fingers; the doctor made a pass or two over his hand and then cried, "Throw it down!" The young man tried to drop it, but his fingers remained closed; a look of surprise and confusion passed over his features, while a flush of triumph lit up the doctor's cheek, and flashed in his eye.

"Ha! there you are at last, Brady, my man; throw it down. I will give you five pounds to throw it down!—five pounds!" Brady strained his hand, shook it, grew very red, made more violent efforts to get rid of the paper, but his fingers refused absolutely to unclose, and the doctor continued to exclaim, "Five pounds! Brady, ten pounds, twenty pounds to throw it down!" And Brady struggled, writhed, dashed his hand up and down, this way and that, grew redder and redder, burst into profuse perspiration, and then suddenly gave it up, saying he was beaten, it was all up with him.

"Not so," said the doctor. "Come, the paper may be set loose, there!" He made a reverse pass or two, and cried, "Now I give you five pounds to retain possession of that paper!—five pounds!"—as he saw Brady make a desperate effort to keep his finger and

thumb compressed—"ten pounds! I will give you twenty pounds to hold it." In vain! Brady strove, struggled, stamped, ground his teeth, doubled up his body, and sent all the blood into his face in desperate efforts to keep the paper; but his quivering fingers relaxed, opened, and the paper dropped in spite of him.

The whole of the party, not excepting the parents of the youth, were lost in astonishment, for they had never seen that experiment before; it was a sudden fancy of the doctor, and all efforts before to produce any effect on Brady had been ineffectual, and Brady's triumph and pretended scepticism had been not small.

"But what of clairvoyance, doctor?" asked Mrs. Fitzpatrick. "Do you go all the lengths with that? Do you believe the Poughkeepsie seer in America can see what is doing in Saturn and Jupiter?"

Dr. Woolstan laughed. "He is quite safe there, madam. He may say what he pleases; we can none of us contradict him. But after what we have just experienced, we may as well suspend our opinions on clairvoyance till we have seen more. These few examples of what lies concealed, even in our physical nature, may prevent us dogmatising too confidently on the spiritual phenomena which also exist in and around us. Much of what is called clairvoyance

is clearly a mere reflex of what is passing in the mind of the person with whom the mesmeric subject is in rapport. What goes further, demands capability of proof. Without such proof we are certainly at liberty to suspend our belief; but as it regards actual science, we are, in my opinion, just now on the verge of great discoveries, both physical and psychological; on the frontiers of a wonderful region of life which the Almighty in the grand progress of his plans has prepared us to enter upon. What it is, we yet know not; we are only thus far admitted to catch the first gleams of splendour which burst through the slowly expanding gates of reality upon us. Even by these gleams we are dazzled, and stumble about in the 'darkness of excessive light.' We are near some great truth, some mighty and substantial revelation, as the alchemists formerly were almost within touch of the great world of chemistry, and all its revolutions of our mechanic and social life; and as the astrologers were conscious of powers and prizes, which eluded them, but which have made the triumph of astronomy under the guidance of advancing art."

"What I have shown you to-night," said the doctor, "are facts, regarded as perfectly threadbare in Europe and America; but the experiment of

strength is such as you may try between any parties that you please, if you have a mesmeric medium present; as I have said, between a giant and a dwarf; a giant and this slender maiden, your daughter."

The whole Tallangetta family were extremely excited by what they had for the first time seen. At supper the doctor sate by Aunt Judith, who said, from what she had witnessed, she felt greatly tempted to ask the doctor after supper to try whether he could communicate with the spirit of a deceased friend. The doctor promised, and, on the return to the drawing-room, a circle was formed at a round table, in which Aunt Judith, Charles, and Georgina took part. Very soon there was evidence of some spirit being present, and the doctor requested it to spell its name. All now seemed to wait with a breathless awe the result of the experiment. It stood thus — written on paper by Charles, at the request of the doctor, as the letters were indicated by raps upon the table — HORACE FITZPATRICK!

"Horace! my brother Horace!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzpatrick. "What do you know of him? Who told you of him?"

"I know nothing," replied the doctor, calmly. "I have never heard of him — I only know what he pleases to tell me. Shall I go on?"

The doctor went on; and soon there stood written out by Charles, at the dictation of the spirit, — "*The old enemy is still at work — his spies have followed you — be on your guard.*"

At this revelation Mr. Fitzpatrick seemed actually paralysed; his face exhibited intense wonder and feeling.

"Is this not going too far?" said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, very seriously. "Is it not meddling with things better let alone?"

"The moment you think so I will desist," said the doctor; but Mr. Fitzpatrick, gasping as it were for breath, signed to him to go on; in the next moment, with a strange, wild look, he staggered from the room, followed by his wife.

"More!—let us know more!" cried Aunt Judith, frantically, but keeping her hands firm in the circle on the table. "Is there no hope — no comfort?"

The doctor continued his inquiries; and Charles wrote on, — "*Yes; friends, true, staunch friends are on the watch — trust in God, and all will go well!*"

"All will go well!" exclaimed, impetuously, Aunt Judith; and, springing from the table, rushed after her brother and Mrs. Fitzpatrick. The rest of the company were left in a state of utmost wonder and confusion. Presently Aunt Judith returned, called

the doctor, and led him into the dining-room. There he found Mr. Fitzpatrick in the strangest excitement.

"What is all this, Dr. Woolstan? What do you know of my history—of my brother? What means all this?"

"It means nothing more," replied the doctor, "than that the spirit of your brother, of whose existence I did not even know till now, has warned you of some evil intended, and also that it will be surely defeated by God's providence."

"And you believe all this? There is no juggle, no trick? My brother Horace, my only brother, died as a mere youth; and yet you, here at the antipodes, know of him, and tell me from him what is more frightful to me than death. Will you swear that you knew nothing of my brother's existence before?"

"I never swear," replied the doctor; "but I will *tell* you, on the word of a Christian and in the presence of God, that I know nothing whatever of your family history, and that what thus surprises and agitates you is nothing whatever surprising to me. Depend upon it, it is God's truth revealed by his own permission for your good. Let it satisfy you that it

is declared that you have only to trust in God, and all will be well."

"Yes, yes! believe that; rest on that, dear brother," said Aunt Judith, taking his hand, and looking earnestly and affectionately in his pale, agitated face. "Oh, that is such a comfort!"

Mr. Fitzpatrick sate as if lost in thought. At length he said, "It is wonderful! most wonderful! I must believe it altogether, or disbelieve it altogether. To think that that villain, Patrick, has pursued me here — destroyed my quiet here. Oh, that is terrible!"

"But then," said the doctor, "if the message as to the evil be true, it is also equally true as to the good. But how natural it is," he continued, "to believe what we fear rather than what we hope! Yet the message says all shall be well; and that is good."

"Oh, very good!" said Aunt Judith. "Oh, excellent; if God be for us, who can be against us?"

"But who are those spies?" continued Mr. Fitzpatrick, still harping upon the dark side of the message. "And who are the friends? Have we any? Are there really such things as friends? Ah! that is the most difficult to believe after all."

"And yet believe it," said Dr. Woolstan, with an open, kindly face, which seemed to impart a wonderful

confidence. "Believe it as firmly as your own life. Friends and foes God will reveal in His own good time; and only one thing is it worth while to let your mind dwell upon: — He has promised, whose promises cannot fail, that if you trust in Him all shall be well."

"I will trust in Him," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, solemnly. "God, I believe; help thou my unbelief;" and, with a voice as solemn as in prayer, he grasped the hand of the doctor.

"Then all is right; all is safe," said the doctor; "and you are as free from real cause of anxiety or of danger as if you wore a mail of adamant."

"I believe it," said Mr. Fitzpatrick; "but the shock of surprise has been too much for immediate return to composure." He withdrew to his bedroom.

Aunt Judith continued to talk to the doctor on the subject. Her mind was wonderfully affected by this startling event; and the message and the circumstances attending it had so much of marvellous reality in them, that she knew not how to disbelieve them. The doctor related many singular facts in relation to spiritual life with a simplicity and distinctness which produced a singular sensation in Aunt Judith's mind. He said he was bred in the faith of George Fox, and, like him, he entirely believed that, if we did but live

near to the inner life, we should have free enjoyment and experience of it. He told her that she must prepare to hear him and his wife, called mystics and enthusiasts; but, if she would come to Mount Corballa, she would find them as matter-of-fact in all matters of fact and daily life as any people in the colony. They were not dreamers, but workers; and she would find his wife as clever a woman, as sound and shrewd a manager, as any she could meet with, and as cheerful as the light, because she felt that she was existing in the great spiritual life of all time and space, so that death and change were to her mind but the mere throwing off of worn-out garments.

The result of the evening had been far different to anything expected, especially as the visit was one of introduction to people yet strangers to each other. All more or less felt the startling effect of the disclosures, and retired their several ways for the night, deeply impressed by it. In the morning at breakfast nothing was said of the evening's occurrence, yet there was a solemn tone in the whole company. Mr. Fitzpatrick appeared as if endeavouring to be cheerful, but was constantly falling into thoughtful silence, and, when the guests departed, he mounted his horse and accompanied Dr. and Mrs. Woolstan some miles on their way through the woods. What

passed in the interview we know not; but he returned far more cheerful, and never reverted to the subject, though his family felt assured, from his manner, that the thought of it was, nevertheless, continually with him.

CHAP. V.

THE BAD YEAR.—BLACK THURSDAY.

AFTER the remarkable evening narrated in the last chapter, there was a great exchange of visits between these few neighbours and the Poncefords; and fresh characters appeared upon the scene. There was Mrs. Quarrier, with her mother-in-law and three or four daughters. Mrs. Quarrier was a remarkably fine woman, who, though she was born in the colonies and had never quitted them, had all the quiet grace and tact of a lady accustomed to good society, and her kindliness of heart justified all that had been said of her. The girls were splendid specimens of Australian beauty; but *the* charade was Mrs. Quarrier, senior. The old lady was to the Fitzpatricks a curious study. She was not less than seventy, yet she seemed to possess energies for half a century to come. Captain Ponceford called her the galvanic battery. She was a most original and independent woman. All her ideas of all sorts of government were of the freest kind. She hated what she called domination and humbug.

She was for all the rights of the human race. Certainly the bush was the place for her; and she was so enthusiastic an admirer of nature, that she was ready any time still to climb a mountain with her long staff in her hand, or to wade a stream. "Give me," she often said, "a Bible and a Shakspeare, and I can live in a desert, and all the better, because I should not be bored with those good-natured people who are always wanting to put you into their own mould for your salvation."

And in truth Mrs. Quarrier, senior, had made good use of her energies; through them her daughters were married to the chief men in the colony, and her son was one of the most affluent of its squatter lords. The best of it was, that Mr. Quarrier was as enthusiastic in conferring kindnesses as she was in asserting her independence; and all the colony acknowledged her wonderful faculty of seeing things a long way off. "That is," she said, "because I look well at the things that are near;" and of this she gave a striking proof on the spot.

"You are new here," said the lively old Mrs. Quarrier, senior, as they were at breakfast the morning after her arrival at Tallangetta; "and you cannot, therefore, judge of what is coming by what is past. But let me tell you one thing: I believe we are going

to have one of the terrifically dry seasons which occur every now and then. There are crises in this country of drought and floods which can only be conceived by those who have witnessed them. Traces of the drought in such years vanish with the season, except in the evidence of the burnt trees; but those of the floods you must have already observed in the neighbourhood of the rivers and creeks. After the drought generally come the floods, and now for the drought. The season so far reminds me of those pre-eminently dry and consuming summers which are the direst calamities of this colony. It is now February, and the country is just one sheet of tinder. The rivers are low; the creeks are dry, or but a mere string of water-holes; and many a plentiful pool is now a basin baked as hard as a dish. The sound of the frog has given way to that of the grasshopper. The grass is drier than hay, the leaves on the trees you may crumble to powder between your fingers, and there lacks but a hot wind and the whole country may be in flames."

"Oh, Mrs. Quarrier," said the ladies, "you are joking now; you are amusing yourself with frightening us."

But the old lady said: "Nothing of the sort. I never was more serious; as I said, you are new to the

colony, and therefore do not comprehend the peril you and the whole country are in. Come, now, I will tell you what happened to us but last year; it is a thing never to be forgotten in Victoria, and as I don't wish to weary you with dry details, I will tell you what occurred to some families that I knew well in the country west of Melbourne; and I will give my narrative the title of BLACK THURSDAY, a name which will always remain an ominous word in this colony:—

"BLACK THURSDAY.

"As the voyager approaches the shores of Victoria, the first welcome land which greets him is the bold promontory of Cape Otway. If it be at night, the blaze from the lighthouse on its southern point sends him its cheering welcome for many a league across the ocean which he has so long traversed in expectation, and calls forth rapturous hurrahs from the throng of passengers who crowd to the forecastle. If it be day, the eye rests on its lofty forest hills with a quiet and singular delight. These heights fully respond to the ideal of a new land only recently peopled. Clothed with forests from the margin of the sea to their very summits, they realise vividly

the approach to a vast region of primæval nature. The tall white stems of the gum-trees stand thickly side by side like so many hoary columns; and here and there amongst them descend dark ravines; while piles of rocks on the heights, alternating with jagged chines and projecting spurs of the mountains, present their solitary masses to the breeze of ocean.

"Amongst the rocks of this wild shore there are sea-caves of vast extent and solemn aspect, which have never yet been thoroughly explored. The forest, extending fifty miles or more in all directions, is one of the most dense and savage in the whole colony. Until lately it was almost impassable from the density of the scrub, and from the thick masses of vines (that is, lianas, or climbing cord-like plants, chiefly parasitical), which, as in the forests of South America, climb from tree to tree, knitting the woods into an obscure and impenetrable shade. Excepting along the track from Mr. Roadknight's station, near the sources of the Barwon, through the heart of the forest to Apollo Bay, a distance of forty miles, you might cut your way with an axe; but would find it difficult to make progress otherwise. The greater part of the promontory—consisting of steep hills covered with gigantic trees intersected by shelving valleys, and dark with congregated fern-trees, beetling

precipices, and stony declivities—affords no food for cattle. In one day, however, known to the colonists as Black Thursday, a hurricane of flame opened its rude and impracticable wildernesses to the foot of man: but presented him, at the same time, with a black and blasted chaos of charred trees, and gigantic fallen trunks and branches.

"It was in this forest, in the early morning of this memorable day, the sixth of February, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, that a young man opened his eyes and sate up to look about him. He had, the day before, driven a herd of fifty bullocks from the station of Mr. Roadknight thus far on his way towards his own residence in the country between Lake Corangamite and Mount Gellibrand. He had reached at evening a small grassy valley in the outskirts of the forest watered by a creek falling into the western Barwon; and had there paused for the night. His mob of cattle, tired and hungry, were not inclined to stray from the rich pasturage before them; and, hobbling out his splendid black horse Sorcerer, he prepared to pass the night in the simple fashion of the settler on such journeys. A fallen log supplied him with a convenient seat, a fire was quickly lit from the dead boughs which lay plentifully around, and his quart-pot, replenished at

the creek, was soon hissing and bubbling with its side thrust into the glowing fire. He had a good store of kangaroo-sandwiches, and there he sate with his cup of strong bush-tea; looking alternately at the grazing cattle, and into the solemn, gloomy, and soundless woods, in which even the laughing-jackass failed to shout his clamorous adieu to the falling day. Only the distant monotone of the morepork — the nocturnal cuckoo of the Australian wilds — reached his ear; making the profound solitude still more solitary. He very soon rolled himself in his travelling-rug, and flung himself down before the fire — having previously piled a fresh supply of timber upon it — near which his trusty dogs lay, and where Sorcerer, in the favourite fashion of the bush-horse, slept as he stood.

"The morning was hushed and breathless. Instead of that bracing chill, with which the Australian lodger out of doors generally wakes up, Robert Patterson found the perspiration standing thick on his face, and he felt a strange longing for a deep breath of fresh air. But motion there was none, except in the little creek which trickled with a fresh and inviting aspect at a few yards from him. He arose, and stripping, plunged into the deepest spot of it that he could find; and thus refreshed, rekindled

his fire, and made his solitary breakfast. But all around him hung, as it were, a leaden and death-like heaviness. Not a bough nor a blade of grass was moved by the air. The trees stood inanimately moody and sullen. He cast his eyes through the gloomy shadow beneath them, and a sultry, suffocating density seemed to charge the atmosphere. The sky above him was dimmed by a grey haze.

"'There is something in the wind to-day, old fellow,' he said, addressing his horse in his usual way; for he had long looked on him as a companion, and firmly believed that he understood all that he said to him. 'There is something in the wind: yet, where is the wind?'

"The perspiration streamed from him with the mere exertion of saddling his horse, and with the act of mounting him to rouse up his cattle. Horse, dogs, and cattle, manifested a listlessness that only an extraordinary condition of the atmosphere could produce. If you had seen the tall, handsome young man seated on his tall and noble horse, you would have felt that they were together formed for any exploit of strength and speed. But the whole troop—cattle, man, and horse—went slowly and soberly along, as if they were oppressed by a great fatigue or the extreme exhaustion of famine.

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"The forest closed in upon them again, and they proceeded along a narrow track, flanked on each side by tall and densely-growing trees; the creeping vines making of the whole forest one intricate, impenetrable scene. All was hushed as at midnight. No bird enlivened the solitude by its cries, and they had left the little stream. Suddenly there came a puff of air; but it was like the air from the jaws of a furnace, hot, dry, withering in its very touch. The young settler looked quickly in the direction from which it came, and instantly shouted to the cattle before him, in a wild, abrupt, startling shout; swung aloft the stock-whip which he held in his hand, and brought it down with the report of a pistol, and the sharp cut as with a knife, on the rear of a huge bullock just before him. The stock-whip, with a handle about half a yard long and a thong of three yards long, of plaited bullock-hide, is a terrible instrument in the hands of a practised stockman. Its sound is the note of terror to the cattle; it is like the report of a blunderbuss, and the stockman at full gallop will hit any given spot on the beast that he is within reach of, and cut the piece clean away through the thickest hide that bull or bison ever wore. He will strike a fly or a spot of mud on a hillock at full speed, and take away the skin with it, making the

rosy blood spring into the wound, and the astonished animal dart forward as if mad.

"Louder and louder, wilder and more fiercely shouted the squatter, and dashed his horse forward over fallen trees; through crashing thickets, first on one side of the road, and then on the other. Crack, crack, went the stinging, slashing whip; loud was the bark of dogs; and the mob of cattle rushed forwards at headlong speed. The young man gazed upward; and, through the only narrow opening of the forest, saw strange volumes of smoke rolling southward. Hotter, hotter, stronger and more steadily came the wind. He suddenly checked his horse, and listening grew pale at the sound which reached him. It was a low deep roar, as of a wind in the tree-tops, or of a heavy water-fall, distant and smothered in some deep ravine.

"'God have mercy!' he exclaimed, 'a bush-fire! and in this thick forest!' Once more he sprang forward, shouting, thundering with his whip. He and the herd were galloping along the narrow wood-track. But, as he had turned westward in the direction of his home, the woods—of which he had before seen the boundary—now closed for some miles upon him; and, as he could not turn right or left for the chaos of vines and scrub that obstructed

the forest, the idea of being overtaken there by the bush-fire was horrible. Such an event would be death, and death only.

"Therefore, he urged on his flying herd with desperation. Crack upon crack from his long whip, resounded through the hollow wood. The cattle themselves seemed to hear the ominous sound, and sniff the now strongly perceptible smell of burning.

"The roar of the fire came louder, and ever and anon seemed to swell and surge, as if urged on by a rough rising blast. The heat was fierce and suffocating. The young squatter's clothes clung to him with streaming perspiration. The horse and cattle steamed and smoked with boiling heat. Yet onward, onward they dashed with lolling tongues. Sorcerer, specked with patches of foam on his dark shining body, seemed to grow furiously impatient of the obstruction offered by the bullocks in his path. As his master's whip exploded on their flanks, he laid back his ears; and, with flaming eyeballs and bared teeth, strove to tear them in his rage.

"Robert Patterson knew that the extraordinary heat and drought of the summer had scorched up the grass; the very ground; had licked up the water from crab-hole, pool, and many a creek; had withered the herbage into crisp hay, and so dried the foliage,

that you might crumble it between your fingers. The country seemed thoroughly prepared for a conflagration, and only required this fiery wind to send a blaze of extermination over the whole land. For weeks, nay months, the shepherds and sawyers had spoken of fires burning in the hills; and, in the fern-tree breaks of this very forest, he had been recently told that flames had been observed in various directions burning redly by night.

"If the fire reached him and his herd before they escaped into the open plains, they must be consumed like stubble. The cattle began to show signs of exhaustion, hanging out their parched tongues, and panting heavily; the perspiration on himself and horse was dried up by the awful heat, and the dogs ran silently, or only whining lowly to themselves, as they hunted every hollow on their way for water. Suddenly, they were out in an open plain, yet with the forest on either hand, but at a considerable distance.

"What a scene! The woods were flaming and crackling in one illimitable conflagration. The wind, dashing from the north in gusts of inconceivable heat, seemed to sear the very face and shrivel up the lungs. The fire leaped from tree to tree, flashing and roaring along, with the speed and the destructiveness

of lightning. The sere foliage seemed to snatch the fire, and to perish in it in a riot of demoniacal revelry. On it flew, fast as the fleetest horse could gallop; and consuming acres of leaves in a moment, still remained to rage and roar amongst the branches and in the hollow stems of ancient trees. The whole wood on the left was an enormous region of intensest flame; and that on the right, sent forth the sounds of the same ravaging fires; but being to windward, the flames could not be seen for the vast clouds of smoke, mingled with fiery sparks, which were rolled on the air. There was a sound as of thunder, mingled with the crash of falling trees, and the wild cries of legions of birds of all kinds; which fell scorched, and blackened, and dead to the ground.

"Once out on this open plain, the cattle were speedily lost in the blinding ocean of smoke, and the young settler, obliged to abandon them, made a dash onward for his life. Now the flames came racing along the grass with the speed of the wind, and mowing all smooth as a pavement; now they tore furiously through some near point in the forest, and flung burning ashes and tangles of blazing bark upon the galloping rider. But Sorcerer, with an instinct more infallible than human sagacity, sped on, over thicket, and stone. and fallen tree, snorting in

the thick masses of smoke, and stretching forward his gaping jaws to catch every breath of air to sustain impeded respiration.

"When the wind veered, the reek, driven backward, revealed a most amazing scene. The blazing skirts of the forests; huge isolated trees, glaring red —standing columns of fire; here a vast troop of wild horses with flying manes and tails, rushing with thundering hoofs over the plain; there herds of cattle running with bloodshot eyes and hanging tongues, they knew not whither, from the fire; troops of kangaroos leaping frantically across the rider's path, their hair singed and giving out strongly the stench of fire; birds of all kinds and colours shrieking piteously as they drove wildly by, and yet seeing no spot of safety; thousands of sheep standing huddled in terror on the scorched flats, with singed wool, deserted by their shepherds, who had fled for their lives.

"But onward flew the intrepid Sorcerer, onward stretched his rider, thinking lightning-winged thoughts of home, and of his helpless, paralysed mother there.

"With a caution inspired by former outbreaks of bush-fires, he had made at some distance round his homestead a bare circle. He had felled the forest

trees, leaving only one here and there, at such distances that there was little fear of ignition. As the summer dried the grass, he had set fire to it on days when the wind was gentle enough to leave the flame at command; watching, branch in hand, to beat out any blaze that might have travelled into the forest. By this means, he had hitherto prevented the fire from reaching his homestead; and he had strongly recommended the same plan to his neighbours, though generally with little effect. Now, the fire was so terrible, and sparks flew so wide on the wind, that he feared they might kindle the grass round his homestead, and that he might find everything and every person there consumed.

"But, behold! the gleaming, welcome waters of Lake Colac! Sorcerer rushed headlong towards it; and wading hastily up to his sides in its cooling flood, thrust his head to the eyes into it, and drank as if he could never be satisfied with less than the whole lake. Englishmen, new to the scene, would have trembled for the horse; but the bush steed knows well what he needs, eats and drinks as likes him best, and flourishes on it. Smoking hot, the rider lets him drink his fill, and all goes well. The heat produces perspiration, and the evaporation cools and soothes him. Robert Patterson did not lose a moment in following

Sorcerer's example. He flung himself headlong from the saddle, dressed as he was, dived, and splashed, and drank exuberantly. He held again and again his smarting face and singed hands in the delicious water, then threw it over the steed that now, satiated, stood panting in the flood. He laved and rubbed down the grateful animal with wave after wave, cleaning the dried perspiration from every hair, giving him refreshment at every pore. Then up and away again.

"He had not ridden two hundred yards, before he saw, lying on the plain, a horse that had fallen in saddle and bridle, and lay with his legs under him, and head stretched stiffly forward, with glaring eyeballs; but dead. Near him was a man, alive, but sunk in exhaustion. His eyes turned wildly on the young squatter, and his parched lips moved, but without a sound. Robert Patterson comprehended his need; and, running to the lake, brought his pannikin full of water, and put it to his mouth. It was the water of life to him. His voice and some degree of strength came quickly back. He had come from the north, and had ridden a race with the fire, till horse and man had dropped here, the horse never to rise again. But Patterson's need was too urgent for delay. He found the man had no lack of provisions;

tion — fanned by the strong wind, and acti
fires in a hundred quarters — extended over t
sun-dried colony.

" It was still early noon, when, with straini
and a heart which seemed almost to stand s
a terrible anxiety, he came near his own hor
darted over the brow of a hill — there it l
The circle within his cleared boundary was u
by the fire. There were his paddocks, his c
huts, and home. With a lightning thought hi
flew up to heaven, and he was the next mo
his door, in his house, in his mother's arms.

" Robert's anxiety had been great for the
his mother, her anxiety was tripled for him.
occasioned by a former conflagration had p
her lower extremities; and now, the idea of
son, her only remaining relative in the colon
met by this unexampled fire in the dense
the terrible Otway Forest, kept her in a sta
most fearful tension of mind. Mrs. Patterson

mere infant, she had managed all her affairs with a skill and discretion that had produced great prosperity. Though her heart was kind, her word was law; and there was no man on her run who dared in the slightest to disobey her; nor one within the whole country round who did not respect and revere her. She had been a remarkably handsome woman. The whole of the floors of the station being built upon one level, in her wheeled chair she could be at any instant in any part of her house or premises.

"The moment the first joy of mother and son was over, what a scene presented itself! The station was like a fair. From the whole country round people had fled from the fire, and had instinctively fled thither. There was a feeling that the Patterson precautions, which they themselves had neglected, were the guarantees of safety. Thither shepherds had driven their flocks, stockmen their herds, and whole families, compelled to fly from their burning houses, had hurried thither with the few effects that they could snatch up, and bear with them. Patterson's paddocks were crowded with horses and cattle; the bush round his station was literally hidden beneath his own and his neighbour's flocks. Stockmen, shepherds, substantial squatters, now houseless men, were in throngs. Families, with troops of children, had

crowding, confusion, and sorrow. Luckil
terson store-room was well stocked with
there could be no want of meat with all th
and herds about them. But for the cattle t
there must soon be a famine; and the mo
the fire abated, scouts must be sent off i
rections — but especially to the high plair
Lake Corangamite — in search of temporar
Meantime fires were lighted in a dozen pl
frying-pans and kettles fully employed; t
of flight, and loss, and grief, hunger, as Hor
sands of years ago asserted, is impudent,
be fed.

"The stories that the people had to tell w
melancholy. Houses burnt down, flocks d
children suffocated in the smoke or lost in t
flight; shepherds and bullock-drivers consur
their cattle. Numbers had fled to creeks ar
and yet had been severely burnt; the flame
over the surface of the water with devouri

tales of horror and devastation. The whole country appeared to be the prey of the flames; and men who were, a few hours before, out of the reach of poverty or calamity, were now homeless paupers.

"'The Maxwells, mother,' Patterson asked — 'is there any news of them?'

"'None, my dear Robert, none,' replied his mother. 'I hope and believe that they are quite safe. They have long ago adopted your own plan of a clearance ring, and I doubt not are just now as much a centre of refuge as we are.'

"'But I should like to be sure,' said Robert, seriously. 'I must ride over and see.'

"'Must you? I think you need not,' said Mrs. Patterson. 'But if you cannot be satisfied, let some one of the men go; there are plenty at hand, and you are already worn out with fatigue and excitement.'

"'No, I am quite well and fresh — I had rather go myself,' said Robert; 'it is not far.' And he strode out, his mother saying —

"'If you find all right, don't come back to-night.'

"Robert Patterson was soon mounted on a fresh and powerful horse, and cantered off towards Mount Hesse. It was only seven miles off. The hot north wind had ceased to blow; the air was cooler, and the

fires in the forest were burning more tamely. Yet he had to ride over a track which showed him the ravages which the flames had made in his pleasant woods. The whole of the grass was annihilated; the dead timber lying on the ground was still burning; and huge hollow trees stood like great chimneys, with flames issuing from their tops as from a furnace, and a red intense fire burning within their trunks below; and from them burning earthy matter came tumbling out smoking and rolling on the ground. He was about crossing a small creek, when he saw an Irishman — a shepherd of the Maxwells — sitting on its banks; his clothes were nearly all consumed from his back, his hat was the merest remaining fragment, scorched and shrivelled. The man was rocking himself to and fro and groaning.

"'Fehan!' exclaimed Patterson. 'What has happened to you?'

"The man turned upon him a visage that startled him with terror. It was, indeed, no longer a human visage; but a scorched and swollen mass of deformity. The beard and hair were burnt away. Eyes were not visible; the whole face being a confused heap of red flesh and hanging blisters. The poor fellow raised a pair of hands that displayed equally the dreadful work of the fire.

"The young squatter exclaimed, 'How dreadful! Let me help you, Fehan—let me take you home.'

"The man groaned again; and, opening his distorted mouth with difficulty and with agony, said,—

"'I have no home—it is burnt.'

"'And your family?'

"'Dead—all dead!'

"'But are you sure—are you quite sure?' said Robert, excitedly.

"'I saw one—my eldest boy: he was lying burnt near the house. I lifted him, to carry him away; but he said, "Lay me down, father—lay me down; I cannot bear it." I laid him down, and asked, Where are the rest? "All fled into the bush," he said; and then he died. They are all burnt.'

"Robert Patterson flung the wretched man a linen handkerchief, bidding him dip it in the creek and lay it on his face to keep the air from it, and turned his horse, saying he would look for the family. He soon found the place where the hut had stood. It was burnt to ashes. On the ground, not far from it, lay the body of the dead little boy. Patterson hastened along the track of the old road to the Maxwells' station, tracing it as well as he could in the fire and the fallen flaming branches. He felt sure the flying family would take that way. In a few

minutes it brought him again upon the creek by which the poor man sate, but lower down.

"There stood a hut in a damp swamp, which had been used years ago for the sheep washing, but had long been deserted. It was surrounded by thick wattles, still burning. The hut was on fire; but its rotten timbers sent out far more smoke than flame. As he approached, he heard low cries and lamentations. 'The family is fled thither,' he said to himself, 'and are perishing of suffocation.' He sprang to the ground, and dashed forward through columns of heavy smoke. It was hopeless to breathe in it, for its pungent and stinging strength seemed to close his lungs, and water rushed from his eyes in torrents.

"But, pushing in, he seized the first living thing that he laid his hands on, and bore it away. It was a child. Again and again he made the desperate essay, and succeeded in bringing out no less than four children and the mother, who was sunk on the floor as dead, but who soon gave signs of life as she came into the air.

"The young man was now in the utmost perplexity with his charge. It was a heart-rending sight. The whole group were more or less burnt; but, as it seemed to him, not so much burnt as to affect their

lives. Their station was three miles distant, and he had no alternative but to leave them here till he rode on and sent a cart for them. With much labour, carrying the children one after another in his arms, he conveyed the woful group to the father.

"As the young man stood bewildered by the cries and lamentations of the family on meeting the father, a horse ridden by a lady approached at a gallop. This apparition contrasted strangely with the lamentable group of sufferers. The young lady was tall, of a most beautiful figure, and was mounted on a fine bay horse. A light skirt and broad felt hat were all the deviations from her home costume that haste had led her to assume. Her face, fresh and roseate, full of youth, loveliness, and feeling, was at the same time grave and anxious, as she gazed in speechless wonder on the scene.

"'Miss Maxwell!' Patterson exclaimed, 'in the name of Heaven, what news? How is all at the Mount? Yet, on this dreadful day, what but ill can happen!'

"'Nothing is amiss, that I know of,' said the young lady. 'We are safe at home. The fire has not come near us.'

"'Thank God!' said Robert. 'I was going to

your house, when I fell in with this unfortunate family. Will you ride back and send us a cart?'

"'But I beg you will come with me, for I, too, was going to you.'

"'To me!' cried the young man, in the utmost astonishment. 'Then all is not right. Is George well?'

"'I hope so,' replied Miss Maxwell; but the tears started into her eyes at the same moment, and Robert Patterson gave a groan of apprehension.

"'I hope so,' added the young lady, recovering her self-possession; 'but that is the point I want to ascertain. Yesterday, he went with Tuncen into the hills to bring in cattle, and this morning the fire surprised them when they had taken two different sweeps along the side of a range. Tuncen could not find George again, but made his way home; hoping his master had done the same. George has not yet come, and the fire is raging so fiercely in the hills, that I could think of nothing but coming to you for your advice and assistance.'

"'Thank you, Ellen!' said Robert, with a sad emotion. 'I will find him if he be alive.' He sprang upon his horse; and, telling the unhappy family that he would send them immediate assistance, both he and Miss Maxwell galloped away.

"I will not attempt to divulge their conversation on the way; but will let you a little into the mutual relations of these two families and these young people. Miss Ellen Maxwell and her brother George were the sole remaining members of their family. As the nearest neighbours of the Pattersons, they had grown into intimate friends. George and Robert had been play-fellows in Van Diemen's Land; and here, where they had come in their boyhood, they were school-fellows. Since then they had gradually grown, from a similarity of tastes and modes of life, the most intimate friends. It was not likely that Robert Patterson and Ellen Maxwell could avoid liking one another. They possessed everything in mind, person, and estate, which made such an attachment the most natural thing in the world. Ellen was extremely attached to Mrs. Patterson, for whom she had the highest veneration. Ellen had received an excellent education in Edinburgh, whither she had been sent to her friends. In her nature she was frank, joyous, and affectionate; but not without a keen sense of womanly pride, which gave a certain dignity to her manner, and a reputation for high spirit.

"All had gone well between herself and Robert till some six months ago. But, since then, there had sprung up a misunderstanding. Nobody could tell

Robert Patterson. From him she did nc
that she felt she had cause for dissatisfactio
refused to explain. When, confounded a
cumstance, he sought for an explanation,
him search his own memory and his heart,
would instruct him. She insisted that th
cease to regard themselves as affianced, and
sented that nothing as yet should be sa
subject to her brother or Mrs. Patterso
ground that it would most painfully afflict

"Ellen, who used to be continually ridir
see Mrs. Patterson with her brother, n
appeared, and proudly declined to give h
for the change; adding that she must al
self altogether, if the subject were rene
her brother she was equally reserved; an
buted her conduct to caprice, bidding Robe
notice of it. Ellen was not without other
but that was nothing new. One young mar
lately come into the neighbourhood paid

his influence. But Ellen gave no countenance to such a supposition. She was evidently under no desire to pique her old lover by any marked predilection for a new one. Her nature was too noble for the pettiness of coquetry, and any desire to add poignancy to coldness. On the other hand, it was clear to the quietly watchful eye of her brother, that she was herself even more unhappy than Robert. Her eyes often betrayed the effects of secret weeping, and the paleness of her cheek belied the assumed air of cheerfulness that she wore.

"Things were in this uncomfortable state at the outbreak of the fire. It was, therefore, a most cheering thought to Patterson that, in her distress, she had flown first, and at once, to him. This demonstrated confidence in his friendship. True, on all occasions, she had protested that her sense of his high moral character was not an iota abated; but, in this spontaneous act, Robert's heart persuaded himself that there lay something more.

"No sooner did he reach the Mount, than, leaving Ellen to send off assistance to the Fehans, he took Tuncen the stockman, and rode into the forest hills. It was soon dark, and they had to halt, but not far from the spot where Tuncen had lost sight of his

went on to some distance, uttering
attract the ear of the lost man; but all
fire had left the ground hot and cover
and here and there huge trees burning
of red-hot iron.

"Finding all their efforts for the night
flung themselves down beside their hor
the earliest peep of dawn, were up a
into the hills. Their way presented
the most shocking effects of the fire. E
they came upon bullocks which had p
Here and there, too, they descried th
kangaroos, opossums, and hundreds of
and shrivelled into sable masses of cinde

"They came at length to the spot w
and George Maxwell had parted; and th
bushman carefully sought out the tracks
feet, and followed them. These were
rated by the fire, or failed from the ro
of the ground. but

fire had leapt over it, sweeping away, however, every shrub and blade of herb from the heights.

"'God defend us!' exclaimed Robert, 'the smoke must have blinded him, and concealed this frightful place. Man and horse are doubtless dashed to pieces.'

"He raised a loud and clear cooée; instantly answered by the wild and clamorous barking of a dog, which, in the next instant, was seen leaping and springing about in the bottom of the dell, as if frantic with delight.

"'That is Snirrup!' exclaimed Tuncen; and the two men began to descend the steep side of the ravine. Robert Patterson outstripped his older and heavier companion. He seemed to fly down the sheer and craggy descent. Here he seized a bough, there a point of the rock, and, in the next instant, was as rapidly traversing the bottom of the glen. Snirrup, the cattle-dog, rushed barking and whining upon him, as in a fit of ecstatic madness, and then bounded on before him. Robert followed in breathless anxiety, stopped in the next moment by the sight of George Maxwell's horse, lying crushed and dead. Robert cast a rapid glance around, expecting every moment to see his friend stretched equally lifeless. But presently he heard the faint sound of a human voice.

"There lay George stretched in the midst of a grassy thicket, with a face expressing agony and exhaustion. Robert seized his offered hand, and George called first for water. His friend started up and ran down the valley at full speed. He was soon back with a panikin of water, which the sufferer drank with avidity.

"He now learned that, as had been supposed, in the thick smoke, the horse had gone over the precipice, and was killed in an instant. George had escaped, his fall being broken by his steed; and he was flung into the thicket, which again softened the shock of his descent. But he had a broken leg, and was, besides, extremely bruised and torn. Life, however, was strong within him; and Tuncen and Robert lost no time in having a litter of poles bound together with stringy bark, made soft with grass and leaves laid in a sheet of the same bark. They had three miles to bear the shattered patient; to whom every motion produced excruciating agonies. It was not long before they heard people in different parts of the wood loudly cooeeing; and their answers soon brought not only a number of men, who had been sent out in quest of them, but also Miss Maxwell herself.

"We shall not attempt to describe the sad and yet rejoicing interview of the brother and sister, nor the

rapidity with which the different men were sent off upon the horses tied in the hills for the surgeon; who lived ten miles off.

"In a few days George Maxwell — his leg having been set and his wounds dressed — had become easy enough to relate all that had happened to him; the dreadful night which he had passed in extreme agony in the glen, and the excitement which the loud ringing cooées of Robert, which had reached him, but to which he was unable to reply, had occasioned both him and the faithful and sympathising dog, who barked vehemently, but, as it proved, in vain.

"From the moment of this tragic occurrence Robert Patterson was constantly in attendance at the Mount on his friend. He slept in the same room with him, and attended with Ellen as his nurse in the day-time. From this moment the cloud which so long hung over the spirit of Ellen Maxwell had vanished. She was herself again; always kind and open, yet with a mournful tone in her bearing towards Robert, which surprised and yet pleased him. It looked like regret for past unkindness. As they sate one evening over their tea, while George was in a profound sleep in the next room, Ellen, looking with emotion at him, said, in a low, tremulous voice, 'Robert, I owe much to you.'

"'To me?' said Robert, hastily. 'Isn't George as much a brother to me as to you?'

"'It is not that which I mean,' added Ellen, colouring deeply, yet speaking more firmly; 'it is that I have done you great wrong. I believed that you had said a most ungenerous thing, and I acted upon my belief with too much pride and resentment. I was told that you had jested at me as the daughter of a convict.'

"Robert sprang up. 'It is false! I never said it,' he exclaimed. 'Who could tell you such a malicious falsehood?'

"'Calm yourself,' added Ellen, taking the young man's hand. 'I shall tell you all.'

"'Hear me patiently; for I must impress first on you the strange likelihood of what was reported to me. You were driven to a stockman's hut, it was said, by a storm — you and a young friend. You were very merry, and this friend congratulated you in a sportive style on having won what he was pleased to call the richest young woman in the colony. And with a merry laugh you were made to add, 'and the daughter of the most illustrious of lags!'

"Robert Patterson, with a calmness of concentrated

wrath, asked, in a low measured tone: 'Who said that?'

"'The woman whom you lately saved with all her family. It was Nelly Fehan.'

"'Nelly Fehan!' said Robert, in amazement. 'What have I ever done to her that deserved such a stab?'

"'You threatened to send Fehan to prison for bush-ranging. You reminded him of his former life and unexpired sentence.'

"'That is true,' said Robert, after a pause of astonishment. 'And this was the deadly revenge — the serpents! But, O Ellen! why could you not speak? One word, and all would have been explained.'

"'I could not speak, Robert. Wounded pride silenced me. But I have suffered severely; have been fearfully punished. I can only say — forgive me!'

"One long embrace obliterated the past.

"The late Mr. Maxwell had been transported for the expression of his liberal political principles in hard and bigoted times. There was not a man in the penal settlement who did not honour his political integrity and foresight, and who did not reverence his character. But the convicts as a body were

proud to claim him as of their own class, though sent thither only for the crime of a Hampden or a Sidney. Whenever reproach was thrown on the convict section of society, the insulted party pointed to the venerable exile, and triumphantly hailed him as their chief. No endeavours, though they were many, and conducted by powerful hands, had ever been able to procure a reversal of his sentence. The injuries of a man of his high talents and noble nature might be comparatively buried at the antipodes; at home they would be a present, a perpetual, and a damaging reproach. He had lived and died a banished, but a highly-honoured man. Still, as he rose to a higher estimation and an unusual affluence, there were little minds who delighted occasionally to whisper — 'After all, he is but a lag.' And it was on this tender point that the minds of his children, whose ears such remarks had reached and wounded, had become morbidly sensitive.

"Amid the general calamity, this reconciliation was like a song of thanksgiving in the generous heart of Robert Patterson, and quickened it to tenfold exertions in alleviating the sufferings of his neighbours. His joy was made boundless and overflowing by a circumstance which appeared to be little short of a miracle. When Robert rode up to his own station,

he beheld his mother, — not seated in her wheeled chair, but on foot, — light, active, and alert, going to and fro amongst the people whose destitution still kept them near his house. The mass of misery that she saw around her and the exertion which it stimulated burst the paralytic bonds which had enchained her for years. The same cause which had disabled her limbs had restored them.

"The conflagration had extended over a space of three hundred miles by a hundred and fifty, and far away beyond the Goulburn, the Broken River, and the Ovens, may still be witnessed the remaining traces of its desolation. Over all this space, flocks and herds in thousands had perished. Houses, ricks, fences and bridges had been annihilated. Whole families had been destroyed. Solitary travellers, flying through the boundless woods before the surging flame, had fallen and perished. For weeks and months, till the kindly rains of autumn had renewed the grass, people journeying through the bush beheld lean and famishing cattle, unable to rise from the ground, and which by faint bellowings seemed to claim the pity and aid of man. Perhaps no such vast devastation ever fell on any nation; and the memory of Black Thursday is an indelible retrospect in Victoria."

CHAP. VI.

THE BUSH FIRE AT TALLANGETTA. — THE QUEST FOR BELL METCALFE.

LONG before Mrs. Quarrier had concluded her terrible narrative, the whole Fitzpatrick family were filled with consternation as well as sympathy. They no longer wondered at the earnestness of the warning that she gave them, and eagerly demanded if there were no preventive means, if there was nothing that they could do to avoid the threatened dangers? "Yes," said the practical old lady; "first clear a space all round your huts by burning the grass, when the wind is still or so gentle that you can command the flame and beat it out at will with a few bushes. Then you have a place of retreat for yourselves and cattle. Then your buildings and ricks are safe. Do the same at all your out-stations, where your sheep camp at night, and let the camping places be quite away from trees. *You* are admirably off on this station; for you have low grounds, moiras, those lands on the level of the rivers which are overflowed

in flood-times. They are now grassy and green on your run by the Goulburn. Let your cattle be herded down near these, and your flocks too as much as possible, that, in case of fire, they may flee thither and find both safety and feed. In every quarter of your run keep these things in view, that your shepherds and stock may not be taken by surprise; for when the wind comes it comes in a moment, and the fire travels with it more fleetly than the fleetest race-horse."

Scarcely had the old lady left the place when all her words were verified. Mr. Fitzpatrick, as he bade the Quarriers good-bye, hastened down to the huts, and asked the overseer what he thought of Mrs. Quarrier's prediction. "If she has said it," replied David Rannock, in evident consternation, "it will be so. I would not lose a moment; in truth, the drought is ominous of the greatest peril."

"Then away!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzpatrick. The overseer mounted his horse, and galloped off. Barks, Purdy, the cook, were sent in like speed to different sheep-runs. Mr. Fitzpatrick and Charles galloped away in other directions; and the event showed that they had not a moment too much. Bush fires broke out in all directions. They saw from their own windows those glorious prairies swept by a flame

which went like intensest lightning across them, and changed their billowy gold into one black, smoking expanse. It was not without the most extraordinary exertions that their shepherds were able, from the more distant tracts of the run, to reach the spots of safety which Mrs. Quarrier had mentioned. The cattle on the hills, at sight of the flames below, appeared to take the way towards the Goulburn by instinct, and were, therefore, driven with the greater ease towards the swamps and moiras on its banks by the stockmen and David Rannock.

Soon there came the awful tidings of the devastations of the fires extending far and wide over the neighbouring districts; of grass, corn, cattle, and sheep destroyed. Black Thursday seemed come back again in all its horrors, — and they saw what Mrs. Quarrier had so vividly described still more vividly acting under their own eyes. Our friends at Tallangetta had been felicitating themselves on the abundance and the splendid appearance of the fruit fast ripening in vineyard and orchards. It was a scene of affluence and beauty in peaches, grapes, figs, melons, and the like, such as previously they had no conception of. In one day the greater portion of this glorious promise was destroyed. The wind came from the blazing forest like the breath of a furnace

seven times heated; and the leaves of the fruit trees shrivelled up as in actual contact with fire; and the fruit was withered, shrunk, parboiled as it were, on the trees, and vast quantities of it soon began to fall to the ground and perish.

It was a woful and melancholy spectacle; a heavy sense of calamity fell on the minds of every one. Peggy Wilks was particularly eloquent on the madness of coming to such a country as this. It would have saved them all the trouble, she said, if they had gone and jumped into the nearest red-hot lime-kiln at home, or into the furnace at Butterly Works. Every one went about silent, awe-struck, and dejected.

But our friends had escaped far better than many of their neighbours, thanks to the foresight of Mrs. Quarrier. The Poncefords had every quarter of their station, which lay altogether on the plains, ravaged by the fire, and were compelled to cut down the shiock and wattle trees wherever they could, to keep their flocks and cattle alive. It was beautiful to see how well they bore it. Captain Ponceford was out all day long, hunting out proper trees, and helping to cut them down. His hands were blistered by wielding the axe, and the heat was still intense; but he rode here and there, and continued to wield

the axe with all his vigour, to supply the necessary comfort for their stock. Mrs. Ponceford shed tears for the sufferings of the poor dumb creatures dependent upon them, and for those of their fellow-men which were continually coming to his ears, but she shed none for their own losses. She was on horseback many hours in each day, searching the woods for suitable trees to fell, and during the rest was as busy seeing that the shepherds were supplied with their necessary rations under the extraordinary circumstances. Mr. Fitzpatrick gave them leave to fell a vast number of shiocks on his station, especially on the hills above; and thousands of beautiful trees, with all their green flowing locks, like those fabled of the mermaid, were laid prostrate, which at any other time he would have witnessed with the profoundest regret.

The Woolstans at Corballa, though further from the rivers, had escaped wonderfully. They lay high, and though the wind had driven the flames up to the tops of the loftiest hills in many parts of the country, the fire had not been able to touch them. They declared that they had had a strong impression upon them that some great calamity was at hand. The drought suggested very naturally fire and dearth. They had, therefore, burnt the places at the feet of

the hills where the fire could find access to them, and had just completed their arrangements when the conflagration came. Their stock was somewhat pinched for pasture, but not in any alarming degree; and they were able to think and act for their neighbours.

Dr. Woolstan rode over to Tallangetta; and finding all safe there, returned and took the way to the Metcalfe's, at Moolap on the Campaspe. Nothing had been heard of them; but, being on the banks of a never-failing stream, less anxiety was felt on their account. The worthy doctor rode along through parts that had been swept by the flames, and were black, desolate, and appalling. He rode on again over low grounds which had escaped, and through some pleasant ranges where, though the intense drought had scorched the grass into the crispest hay, the fires had not reached. His mind was greatly relieved, and he was even singing aloud a favourite thanksgiving hymn when, as he said, on passing over a certain ridge, a heavy cloud fell on his heart. A heavy black cloud settled also on his brain, and a confused sense of evil bewildered and confounded him. It was as if tons of distress, as he expressed it, had fallen on him. He sat like a stone on his horse, which, as if of its own will, stood still as a statue.

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small herd of kangaroos on the slopes,
up and listened, but did not take to flig
blue mountain parrots in the tree-tops g
gorgeous plumage in the sun, and u
peculiarly soft and melodious notes. It v
of nature's sweetest repose and beauty.

He looked onward, and all wore the s
smile. He could see the

in his brain of woe! woe! woe! He put on his horse, in a feeling of impatience to reach the station, and learn what could justify this rending, as he termed it, of his very vitals. The nearer he drew, a more terrible anxiety hung on his heart. When he was just upon the station, he cast a rapid glance over it: — all was profoundly calm; but ah! why only one smoke from all those chimneys? At this hour — when flocks return to the camping grounds, and the shepherds to their huts; when all is usually full of life; when the smoke streams up actively from the different huts; when the bleat of sheep and occasional low of cattle, the bark of dogs and the passing of people from one hut to another show that all are at home — why this stillness? why this solitary smoke?

The doctor rode up, full of wonder and surprise; no dog announced his approach, no single person peered from the door of a hut. The hoofs of his horse sounded hollow in the silence as he cantered up to the door of the chief hut. He cried, "Hillo!" and cracked his whip. In the next moment an old man, very old, and wrinkled, and grey, half bent double, appeared at the door; and at the sight of the doctor he turned round and retreated into the hut, as if he had seen something terrible. Again, in a moment, he reappeared, his head shaking as with

palsy, and every limb trembling violently. Large tears rolled down his withered face; and as the doctor demanded what was amiss, he again shook his head from side to side as in an agony, appeared struggling to speak, but in vain, and, dashing his sleeve across his eyes, he again suddenly retreated into the hut.

The doctor dismounted, and found the old man, a faithful servant of many, many years, weeping violently in a chair into which he had sunk. The doctor placed his hand kindly on the old man's shoulder, and said a few kind words to console him; but it was some time before he could find composure enough to tell his story. He was the only person at the station. Every one besides, including Mrs. Metcalfe, were gone off in search of Bell, who had been tending a flock on the banks of the river a long way off. Three days had now elapsed since the flock had been found wandering without him.

"Where was that? Where was the flock found, Barzillai?" asked the doctor.

"Near the Wild-dog hollow on the Yan-Yan creek, doctor."

"It is well," said the doctor; "let me have some tea, and give my horse a good feed of corn. I must go there to-night."

"The Lord bless you for it, doctor," said the old man, tears again streaming down his withered face. "If God wills that he shall be found, there is no man that is so likely as you, doctor, and you love poor Bell, I know, almost as much as foolish old Barzillai. Oh Lord! Oh Lord! that I should live to see this! Me, such an old, tottering, useless thing, and poor Bell such a fine strong young fellow, who can leap like a kangaroo! Could, I mean,—could,—could,—pray the Lord he may now!" and the old man bustled off to get tea ready.

Dr. Woolstan sate sunk in deep thought while tea was preparing; once or twice he rose and strode across the hut, and then sate down again. Old Barzillai brought in tea, and a smoking chop. The doctor ate and drank, without uttering a word. "My horse," he said at length, rising and going to the door.

"It is there," said Barzillai; and as the doctor mounted, he drew close to him, and said, "Do you *think* you shall find him, doctor? If you could just say so, I know it would prove true."

He squeezed the old man's hand, as he put his horse in motion, and said, "That is as it may please God, but, my good old friend, I feel a hope."

"God bless you for that," said the old man, gazing

after the doctor, who disappeared at a rapid canter into the dusky forest. On he went, over hill and down dale, through the depth of most solitary forests, leaping fallen trees, pushing on through scrub and jungle, as if the way were tracked, and the light were on the earth. About midnight he saw a fire blazing before him in the valley, and on reaching it saw a party seated partly on the trunk of a fallen tree, and partly lying on the ground round it. The dogs barked at his approach, and the silent people looking up showed him Mr. and Mrs. Metcalfe, Brady, and a couple of shepherds.

There was no need to ask if they had been successful; their wearied and dejected looks showed plainly that they were in the depth of trouble. They arose as the doctor alighted, and grasped his hand one after another without uttering a word. The doctor sate down, and all resumed their seats in silence. Thus they sate for at least a quarter of an hour, when the doctor said, "My dear friends, we must not despair. The moon will rise in two hours: I will then set out." The father and mother shook their heads, as if in despair. "I shall set out then," repeated the doctor; "and till then let me lie down, and let no one come near or speak to me." He wrapped himself in a rug which lay at hand, with-

drew to a tree near, and flung himself down on his face.

Still and motionless he lay through those two long hours. The fire flared and snapped; the tuons or flying opossums came forth and shrieked in the tall blue gums over head; the flying squirrel made its chattering cry; the opossum uttered its snoring sound, and gambolled like a kitten over the long dependent boughs of great red gum-trees; and through all, the woful parents sate and gazed into the fire. They refused to lie down, though worn out with fatigue and trouble; they still were heavily drowsy, and frequently nodded, started, looked round, and said, "Is it morning yet?"

At the end of the two hours the moon was seen above the horizon, and the doctor was observed to be on foot; and fetching up his horse he came leading it towards the fire, where Brady was busy putting on the kettle, and getting out some breakfast.

"I hope you have slept, doctor," said Mrs. Metcalfe, her noble countenance exhibiting the stony expression of her natural fortitude struggling with deep affliction.

"No," said the doctor, "I have not slept. I have striven to get above all the distracting agitations of the natural mind, into that region of pure freedom

where the spirit communes with its maker, and is still. It is hard wrestling with one's own flesh and blood, but I have found peace in it. My way lies over yon hill," pointing eastward. Mrs. Metcalfe solemnly shook her head, saying,—

"Alas! we have sought all over that quarter for these two days. I fear me it is useless. The whole of those hills and valleys have rung with the loud cooées of our men."

"Nevertheless, that is my way, and I believe I have no time to lose," replied the simple-hearted man. He took some of the damper from the log on which it was laid, and put it in his pocket, drank off a panikin of tea, took the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Metcalfe affectionately, saying, "Do n't be cast down; I have faith that all will yet be well." Tears gushed into the eyes of his sorrowing friends, as he said this; and, turning, he mounted his horse. At the same moment, he saw Brady also mounted, and ready to accompany him. "That is kind, my dear Brady," said the doctor; "you can greatly comfort and assist me."

"Keep my dog secure in his chain," said Brady, turning to his father, "and should you wish to follow, he will bring you direct to me."

The two friends rode away. The doctor rode on

without speaking. The moon was bright, and almost perpendicular over head. The forest was nearly as light as day, and the stems of the trees, white as marble in their new bark, had a ghostly radiance in its beams. The doctor rode on; — he asked no questions of Brady as to where they had already searched, but followed solely the promptings of his own mind. Morning broke, day grew, and the sun began to pour down upon them his burning rays. Still the doctor rode on, and looked neither to right nor left. Brady occasionally made a divergence, cantering off to explore some thicket, or take a survey from the brow of a hill; but the doctor, without seeking to check or encourage these little detours, still went on his way.

It was near noon that, as they were traversing the side of a considerable hill, Brady observed a sort of still but excited attention in the doctor's face. It was set with a direct onward look. His eyes seemed fixed on some particular spot, and the expression of his countenance was singularly solemn and expressive. Brady thought that the old prophets must have worn such a sacred and ennobled look. He felt a strange reverence for the man with whom he had so often joked and played in the most boyish freedom. Anon, they beheld a hollow in the hill side, filled with

dense masses of bushes and dark wattles. On some tall trees above this jungle sate a number of the Australian carrion crows, and raised loudly their strange, bleating, and piteous cries.

"That means something, Brady." They were the first words the doctor had spoken since they set out.

"Then I fear it means no good," said Brady; "for where they haunt there is generally death."

"Let us see," said the doctor. They were on the edge of the jungle, the hollow in which it grew being evidently the consequence of a landslip at some former period. The doctor dismounted, and tied his horse. Brady still kept his saddle, and said, "This is a whip-stick scrub, doctor; you cannot penetrate it without the axe, and besides, we have searched it all round."

"We must search it again, Brady; give me the axe," said the doctor. But Brady sprang at once from his horse, drew his small axe from his belt, and said, "Where shall I hew a way, doctor?" The doctor pointed out the direction, and Brady went vigorously to work. The scrub consisted of dwarf gum-trees, of about fifteen feet high, growing up closely, side by side, like so many wands of sufficient size to make the long handles of bullock-whips; hence the name. These rods were woven

together with lianas, or vines, as they are called, — long, tough, rope-like plants, — till the whole was an impenetrable mass, except to fire and the axe. Brady's steel soon cleared a way into the centre of the jungle, throwing down the rods, and treading over them as he went on. At once he came to a little stream trickling down from the hill side. "Follow me," said the doctor, taking his way up the stream, stooping under the boughs of the jungle.

"Beware, doctor!" said Brady, as he saw themselves coming into an open place wildly grown with tall clumps of sedge, wild grass, and watery shrubs. "This is the very place for the black snake." The doctor went on, rising as he got out of the dense mass of the whip-stick gums, and directing his way through the boggy soil still up the stream. At once Brady, uttering a wild cry, dashed past him, and the next moment was seen on his knees beside what appeared to be a corpse. He was wringing his hands in distress, and convulsed with a violent passion of tears, when the doctor's calm face was bent down to the body — clearly that of poor Bell.

"He is dead, doctor! he is dead!" said Brady, dropping showers of tears, and frantically driving away the flies with his handkerchief. Poor Bell lay on his back close to the spring which gushed out of

the hill side. His eyes were closed, his face pale as marble, his hat rolled into the water, and his black hair wildly strewn about his thin and ashen features.

The doctor stooped, put his hand upon his mouth, and then laid it for a considerable space on the region of the heart.

"He is *not* dead!" said the doctor. "There has been fever and probably delirium here, but these are over; the ebbing force of life needs rallying." He took his panikin from his belt, dipped it in the spring, and then showed that he had come prepared by drawing a small wicker-guarded flask of brandy from his pocket. He poured some into the water, and applied some of it to the parched lips of poor Bell. After one or two repetitions of the restorative the poor lad moved his lips, and sought to reach the fluid with his tongue.

"He lives! he lives!" exclaimed Brady, starting up, and as suddenly flinging himself down again by his brother, crying, "Bell! Bell! my dear Bell!"

"Gently, Brady; command yourself," said the doctor. "We must be very cautious;" and he gently poured a little of the liquid into the sufferer's mouth. He leaned anxiously over his face; watched the effect of the stimulant with a fixed intensity. Then

he gave him a little more, and, when Brady attempted to speak, putting out his hand towards him warningly. In a little time Bell gave an audible sigh, a slight tinge of colour came into his cheek, and there was a motion in his fingers. The doctor saw all this with the liveliest attention, and continued to repeat the stimulant at intervals. At length Bell raised his right hand and laid it on his own breast. There was a trembling in the eyelids, and the eyes for a moment opened, and closed again.

"He is going!" exclaimed Brady. "We are too late — too late!"

"Be patient, my dear Brady," said the doctor. "Give us time. And now go out of the jungle, make a fire, and get some tea." "Will he live, though?" said Brady, as he started up to go. "We will hope it," said the doctor; "for what else were we sent?" And Brady dashed away. He had scarcely scrambled together some dry leaves and branches and set fire to them, and was running for water, when he saw the doctor coming, carrying Bell in his arms. He laid him down on his rug near the fire, and bade Brady make all haste with the tea. Brady pushed the quart pot into the fire, opened his little bags of sugar and tea, but with trembling hands; and at every moment casting a glance from these to Bell, who lay with his

eyes now open, but dreaming, and as directed to no particular object. The doctor seized the tea and sugar and threw them into the boiling water. Very soon the panikin of tea was ready; and the doctor, cooling it by pouring it repeatedly from the quart to the panikin and back, knelt down to give some of it to the half-conscious patient. But Bell now received the nourishment almost greedily; and presently he attempted to speak, and they thought he said, but so faintly as to be almost inaudible, "Where am I?"

"Hush! hush! my dear Bell," said the doctor, "don't be anxious, you are amongst your friends; all is right." And they saw with wonder and delight that he became every minute more conscious, and strong. In a few hours he was so well as to be able to say that he had been very ill, and had lost all sense of life. The doctor nursed him, gave him from time to time yet a little nourishment, and he at length fell asleep. During this time Brady's dog came rushing up to them, and would have barked for joy, but Brady seized him by the muzzle, and carried him to a distance, where he made him, in obedience to his perfect discipline, lie down, and remain by his saddle. The dog was the herald of the approach of the party, and Dr. Woolstan hastened to meet them, and to

give them the joyful intelligence of the life of their son, and to enjoin the utmost caution upon them.

But no power could restrain them from hurrying forward to where the young man lay. There the rejoiced and yet trembling parents fell on their knees by the side of their recovered son, and with silent tears poured out their prayerful thanks to God.

Towards evening Bell was sufficiently restored by the judicious nursing of the doctor and his mother, to tell them that he had been seized by a strange dizziness and fever after several days' hard watching and toiling after the flock in the intense heat; that he had got down to this spring, telling his dog to mind the flock, and this command the poor dog had so faithfully obeyed that he was found almost dead with hunger, yet still crawling after his charge. By this, however, he lost all trace of his master, and had proved of no use in attempting to find him. Bell said, that reaching the water he had drunk copiously, and immediately afterwards the world seemed to go round with him, the earth seemed to heave and sink under him, and soon he lost all sense but that of a strange, urging, inextricable confusion in his brain. When this left him he had found himself too feeble to raise even his hand, and he saw several huge black snakes come and play and splash

in the water near him. When they glid rapidly away it was only at the approach of several wild dogs, which snuffed, started, and ran back at sight of him, and at their retreat the snakes returned again and resumed their gambols, while the crows over head looked down with their black, glistening, fiend-like eyes, and uttered their lamentable, but, to him, horrible notes. He had lain in the terrible conviction that he should soon perish of exhaustion, till happily at length sense and feeling passed away.

We could not express, if we would attempt it, the rejoicings over the son who had been lost and was found. Brady galloped off to the station for a light spring cart with a bed in it, and one of the men mounted the doctor's horse to convey the happy intelligence to Mount Corballa. It was two days before the party could reach their station with their patient. Frequently they had to take him from the cart, and carry him on a litter constructed of branches, over stony ranges, and abrupt gullies. At length, however, they reached home: at length poor old Barzillai had the delight, a weeping and trembling one, of seeing his dear lad, as he called him, safe and wholly convalescent. The doctor took his leave amid the blessings of the grateful and once more happy family, and with a wonderfully augmented sense of veneration for his

deep but unaffected piety, and the almost prophetic character of his mind.

The bad year rolled on its way; from all quarters came melancholy details of dearth, loss of cattle, and suffering of families; but amongst these tidings were mingled strange reports of the discoveries of gold; of people running, as if struck with insanity, up the country; of deserted towns, highways crowded with wildly hastening throngs, drays, stores, tents, and tools; and of marvellous riches snatched up from the scarcely covering soil. On the heels of a terrible crisis came thus one more wondrous than any fable, and the whole colony was in a chaos of excitement, joy, fear, doubt, and extravagant rumour, before which all description is annihilated.

CHAP. VII.

AN UNEXPECTED NEIGHBOUR.

"THIS is heart-breaking work," said Abner Wilks one evening, as he came in to tea, with a number of nectarines in his hand, shrivelled up into little lumps, resembling leather more than anything else; "cruel, woful work it is, to see such fine fruit ruinated a thissens. It makes me quite malancholy to go about the garden, and see nothing but scorched leaves, all curled up into cockle-shells, and grapes, and melons, and apples, and plums, and all sorts of fruit, coddled on th' trees. The 'taters are all dried in th' tops to nothing, and they tell me they will grow no more till rain comes, and then they 'll put out new tops and new 'taters, so we must get them before they dun that, half grown as they are."

Abner looked quite cast down and out of heart, for he loved his garden as every good gardener does, and had walked about with extraordinary pride amid such a show of fruit as he had never before seen growing in the open air.

"Ay, a nice country, is n't it?" said Peggy, "a very nice country. Do n't you think it would have been fine gardening in old Sprittlecake's oven? The old baker could have sown your seed for you as soon as his faggots had burnt down to hot ashes, and that 's the sort of stuff you 've been trying to grow your ingins and your reddiges in. And so you thought, did you, that you were going to grow peaches, and apricocks, and melons, and all such grand things out of doors, eh? Without walls, or glass, or green-houses, or any mander of thing, eh? And wuff! comes the fire out of old Sprittlecake's oven, and just settles them! A nice country indeed! A very nice country! I hope you enjoy it, Abner."

"Well," said Abner, "if I do, it 's more nor you seemen' to do, Peggy. You seemen' to tak a delight in making bad worse, and if you can find a raw, in hitting your hardest on it. Now is n't it enough to drive any man out of his senses to see such a world of beautiful fruits cut off in their prime, as one may say, and all the beans, peas, and the very parsley, shrivelled up into curl-papers? And yet you can jibe one about it. Prithee, hold thy tongue, wench."

"But I thought," said Peggy, pouring out the tea, "that you had hit on such a famous scheme for making all the months come right. Did you put

down any note about sowing parsnips and growing grapes in old Sprittlecake's oven? But I think that 's a touch above you, Abner."

"But," said Abner, "such a hot wind and such a conflagoration, they tell'n me, do n't mayhap come more than once in a man's life."

"Nay, they had n't need," said Peggy; "once is enough for me; but Milly Barks says these hot winds blow every few days in summer."

"But not such a wind as this," replied Abner; "and such a bush fire was never known."

"I reckon it waited of us," said Peggy; "it was very good of it; we generally come in for a boon if there be one. Fah! I just went out at the door, and slash comes the heat like a blast-furnace into my face. I thought I was killed outright. My breath was gone, my throat was burnt, the water gushed out of my eyes, and my face acchully seemed skinned. And this is a Christian country, is it? I wish I had 'em as first came and found it out; a nuisance it! And but for these wandering, helliraky vagabonds as can 't be quiet at home, nobody need ha' come here to be grilled alive, a plague on them!"

"But what are our troubles, Peggy, to those of thousands? They have lost all they have, and some on 'em their lives. It is enough to melt the heart of

a stone to hear of all the suffering there is. See what a state our neebor Captain Ponceford's run is in. All burnt out, and their cattle perishing, and the Captain and the Missis running about in the woods, and working like slaves to keep the poor creturs alive."

"Well, and they should e'en have had more sense than ha' come to such a country," said Peggy. "If people will run into the fire with their eyes open, who 's to hinder 'em? Not me, I 'm sure."

"And there 's poor Bell Metcalfe has nearly lost his life," said Abner; "it was a narrow miss, and would have been but for Dr. Woolstan, who traced him fifty miles through the bush by negromancy, they say, and recovered him at the last gasp."

"Ay, that 's somethin' of a man now," said Peggy; "he 's up like a gentleman and 's off, and saves his feller-creturs, and you sitten here, whimpering and simpering over a lot o' coddled apples, as if that would do you or anybody any good. What art good to, Abner, I should like to know; what art good to, I wonder?"

"Bravo, Peggy!" cried Abner, clapping his hands, jumping up, and tossing off the last of his third cup of tea. "Those are the sensiblest words you 've said these three months. That 's the truth, Peggy mine;

and so just hear, master has told me to go and help the Poncefords all I can; the garden can't be no worser, and wo n't be no better till rain comes, and I 'm off."

He took down his capital American axe, ran up stairs for a night-cap, and came down again with a face radiant with pleasure. His warm heart bounded with joy at the thought of lending a helping hand to neighbours in distress.

"Are you really going, Abner?" asked Peggy Wilks, as she stood with tears in her eyes, and the corner of her apron in her hand. "Now, directly? and how long for?"

"Oh! for a week or so, just as they may want me," said Abner, shouldering his axe.

"Well, God bless thee, my lad," said Peggy, coming up and kissing him; "and think no more of my nonsense; thou knows I mean no harm, but I can't help raffling a bit, now and then. My mother was so before me, and yet the old man and her lived to be ninety. Her raffling broke no bones, thou sees."

"Not it," said Abner, giving her a good smack, and striding out of the hut; "only mustard to the old man's beef." And with a hand laid on it, he leaped lightly over the post-and-rail fence, and strode swiftly down the valley.

Peggy stood watching him till he waved his hand in

passing behind a tall thicket, and said: "Um! if I'd knowed that he was going off at once, I'd a' kept my tongue within my teeth. And it took me at such a nonplush, that I never thought to tell him to take care the burnt trees do n't tumble upon him." She turned, and went in.

Summer passed on with all its drought, dearth, and suffering. Autumn came, with rushing winds and driving rains. The refreshed ground very soon gave evidence of new life, and the kangaroo-grass in the woods began to make them verdant with its tufts of delicate green, and the cattle and sheep to devour it eagerly. Soon there was grass short but delicious to the cropping flocks on the plains, and water running in a thousand channels, and pools and rivers once more swelling with their welcome supplies. Once more the countless swarms of frogs, which had saved themselves in the earth, made the air resound with their many strange notes. The flocks and herds ranged once more in leisurely plenty; the forest, and all nature, seemed relieved and restored.

But the floods as well as the drought, which Mrs. Quarrier had predicted, came. The rains, so long delayed, once let loose, appeared as if they would never cease. For a whole fortnight they continued to pour down, day and night. Occasionally fierce

winds raged through the woods, and it was hoped that they would carry away the rain; but soon the clouds reassembled, and the still, steady, soaking rain continued to fall. Soon the brooks and rivers began to shine out above their banks, and on low grounds spread wide sheets of water like lakes.

Amid all this the most wonderful rumours flew to and fro of the discovery and the gathering of gold. All Melbourne and Geelong were said to have deserted their homes, and to have crowded up to Ballarat and Mount Alexander. If you had believed everything that was said, that mount must be a mount of solid gold. People were shovelling gold into sacks like potatoes, and huge nuggets lay about like boulder-stones. Of all the marvels the most marvellous was that neither natives, nor squatters, nor shepherds, had seen these glittering treasures; had never run their toes against them; had never picked them up to pelt restive sheep or ox. Young men had come out of England, and gathered such sacks of gold that they had returned millionaires in the very same ship that brought them out. The lawyer, the merchant, the clergyman, all were armed with spade and pick, and were making far prettier pickings on the gold-fields than they had ever done before. Officials of all ranks threw up their posts,

and posted away to these wonderful regions. Sydney was rushing overland and by steamer with all its scamps. Not a lag would lag behind either there or in Van Diemen's Land. It came with all its demons. Not a creek but ran with gold, not a sod but covered it, not a tent there but had a lad in, to whom the Aladdin of Arabia was a mere goose. The governor rode up and poked away the moss from the roots of trees, and picked up nuggets. He sate on his horse, and saw rude fellows shovelling up gold like sand.

At such news the very earth under people's feet seemed to creep and tremble. Shepherds, stockmen, hut-keepers, all ran helter-skelter away; every man afraid of being too late in the scramble. Flocks, herds, horses, everything alive or dead, were left to take care of themselves. Who would stay in the woods amongst the shadows when he might in a few days be a man of untold substance? It was every one for himself, and the devil take the hindermost. The squatters rode about in consternation; the flocks were all astray in the bush, with only the wild dogs watching them. Not a man was to be had for love or money. Love! What love ever withstood gold? Money! What of that when here was the stuff it is made of, to be had in any quantity for the stooping?

Women and little children, and a few old super-

annuated fellows who had been set in the corner as only fit to keep the fire in and the dogs out, were called hastily into the bush and set a shepherding. The squatter often looked after one of his own flocks, and his wife and daughters brought round the rations. Young ladies mounted and scoured the forest hills and glens reconnoitring bullocks. There went a wild cry through the whole land that the end of the squatter world was come, and that wool should be no more! How could such a thing as squatting exist, when all the world was running at full speed? Where could the wool soon be but hanging on the thorns, and the mutton but in the stomachs of the dingoes? The prospect was, in truth, frightful, and never were men fuller of fright than the squatters. Oh! out of what a blessed and bountiful rest they were at once thrown by the stupendous occurrence! And they stood fixed in despair. Ruin, ruin, inevitable ruin, seemed their portion; and yet why not run too to the diggings, where, if half were true, they could secure instant recompense?

But the poor squatters clung with a convulsive love to their pleasant wilds, their flocks and herds. Some strained every nerve, and put every woman and child on the stretch to keep their stock safe; others in their panic sold or offered to sell their runs

for an old song. Mr. Quarrier rode over to Tallangetta, like a man frantic. Every shepherd, every man of every kind had run off. His wife was cooking; the girls running for water, peeling potatoes, and making the beds. His mother was on horseback hunting up the cattle; and as for himself, he appeared to be galloping from station to station like the man in the siege of Jerusalem, crying woe! woe! woe! to himself and the whole colony.

At Tallangetta things were far better. Though the shepherds and stockmen had run off, yet Barks, Purdy, Abner, and David Rannock stood true. They declared, one and all, that they longed to have a race for the diggings too, but they would wait awhile and see how the stock was to be cared for. Mr. Fitzpatrick thanked them heartily, tripled their wages, and declared at the very first opportunity they should have their adventure. The women at the huts cooked, and Charles drove round with rations; so all was wonderfully well under the circumstances.

But still a heavy load lay on the minds of the Tallangetta family. They could not see how this state of things could be maintained. If there were no men to be had, the squatting interest must go down, and all the stock must perish. It was a

melancholy prospect. If they attempted to sell, who would buy? what could they get for their property? And to return to England poorer than they came out was not to be thought of. Tallangetta in all its beauty, with that glorious view of woods, and waters, and mountains, was a house of woe.

The Poncefords, the Woolstans, the Metcalfes, were all in the like condition; they were all strenuously employed in preserving their property, and could not, therefore, make visits to sympathise or counsel with one another; but they showed, when Charles or his father rode over to them, wonderful patience, and the doctor, whom they found baking a damper while his flock rested at noon, away in the bush quite cheerful, and the first man to pronounce all this a fleeting state of things. "An earthquake," he said, "does not last very long. Nothing very violent is lasting, and nothing ever was so violent as this crisis, and therefore it *must* be proportionately short. I bide my time," said he, taking up his damper, now baked, and bidding his visitor smell how delicious it was.

But Mr. Quarrier kept galloping about, offering his run at any price, saying the colony was ruined; it might be a place for navvies, but was so no longer for gentlemen. One day, in the midst of a violent

tirade on the subject, he pulled out a letter from his mother and threw it on the table. The next moment he was gone, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick, taking up the letter, read, to the whole family's astonishment, as follows:—

"My dear Mrs. Fitzpatrick,—Do n't let my son persuade Mr. Fitzpatrick to sell his station. The colony ruined by the gold! It will be made by it. Wait a few weeks, and you shall have shepherds at pleasure. All is not gold that glitters at the diggings, any more than anywhere else. Thousands, I hear, are already disappointed or disgusted. Those are your men. They will be shepherds and stockmen for good wages. And then, only think what a price meat will be! What a price everything will be; hundreds of thousands pouring in to get the gold, and, thanks to good old mother Nature and her laws, as surely to eat and drink. Hurrah for the gold fields! Hurrah for the squatters! Theirs will be the chief digging. The Golden Age is at last come to the bush! Yours affectionately,

"ANN QUARRIER.

"Gurragong, April, 1853."

"And she is right again!" said Mr. Fitzpatrick, starting up. "How is it that this old lady can always

see, and all of us beside are blind? I will pledge my existence that she is right, and yet her own son has been riding about like a maniac, and might have ruined us all. Hurrah for the gold-fields! Hurrah for the squatters! Hurrah, three times three, and nine times nine, for Mrs. Quarrier the wise!"

Charles flung up his cap, and the ladies all joined in the hurrah, clapping their hands in delight.

"But there is one thing," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "that should not be neglected," as if struck with a sudden idea. "That stretch of land on the Goulbourn, so indispensable for our sheep-washing and summer pasturage, which was made over to us by Mr. Farbrother, is only transferred verbally. If the value of stations rises greatly, as it will, he may be disposed to draw back. We must have this looked to before the panic is over. What is to be done?"

"I will ride off at once to him," said Charles, "and take the agreement to sign."

"But he lives now beyond the Campaspe, and I fear the waters are out, in which case it will be impossible to reach him."

The ladies were all terrified at the danger, and begged that Charles might not go; they were all too well acquainted with his ardent, daring temperament.

"No, no!" said Charles. "I will run into no danger. I will ride to the Metcalfes'. They have a boat,

and live on high ground above the river. I have no doubt they can put me across. Trust to me," said Charles, "I'll take good care of my precious self."

Early in the morning he mounted a splendid brown mare, with the buoyant and delightful feeling of youth backing a noble steed, and bound for new views, and perhaps adventures. He rolled up behind him his oil-skin overalls and coat, with a hood, so that in case of rain he could defy it all, and with the necessary supply of matches, a rug, and some provision in case of being obliged to lie out in the woods by any accident, he dashed away with his favourite tawny bull-terrier, Club, rushing on before him, barking in obstreperous delight at the prospect of a run into the bush.

Charles had to pass over the hill above the house, and then he plunged into the boundless forests. For an hour or two he cantered along, occasionally called out of his way by the barking of Club, who had a wild cat, or an opossum, or a bandicoot, or something of the sort in a hollow tree, or under the fallen logs; and Charles stayed to assist the dog by a few strokes of his small axe at his girdle. But soon he began to think he was wasting time, and calling Club to keep with him, rode on briskly through the forest. Towards noon the wind rose, and masses of

thick, dark clouds were poured over the woods. He perceived a storm coming, and prepared for it by dismounting and putting on his oil-skin suit. It was not too soon; the squally rain came down in torrents, and though it could touch no other part of him it drove directly into his face and prevented his seeing the way before him. What was worse, it also baffled his horse and impeded his speed. Charles, therefore, drew up under the side of a light-wood tree, whose olive-like foliage presented the only shelter amongst the trees of the forest. Long and furiously beat down the dashing, splashing rain, and mingled with it came several cracks of intense thunder, late as it was in the season. Charles looked round from time to time to see if any break in the clouds promised a discontinuance of the tempest, but all was one thick misty obscurity in the atmosphere. Club sate, and whined at the foot of the tree; the horse pawed the ground impatiently, its shoulders and flanks smoking from the evaporating rain, and he now inwardly regretted the delay occasioned by Club's hunting propensities. But he could not, he thought, be far from Moolap, and he resolved to go on. His mare was glad to proceed, and spite of the tempest still driving right into her eyes, she trotted on. But presently Charles saw with astonishment that the track had disappeared.

How was that? Had he left the true one? He became alarmed, and took out his compass. North was his true direction, and he now saw that for some time he must have been riding precisely north-east.

What was to be done? He must cut across westward to regain the true path to Moolap; but confounded by the driving, obscuring tempest, it would be difficult, perhaps, to strike the path again. He might come upon it where it was too faint to perceive it. He might even now be so far that by taking that course he should strike the river lower down. There was nothing else, however, for it, except going back, which his pride forbade. He would not willingly confess, at home, that he was "bushed," as the term is, between Tallangetta and Moolap. He rode on eagerly, anxiously, looking right and left for some object of recognition. Now he was involved amongst a chaos of fallen trees; anon his horse was wading to the sides through deep scrub, dripping with the wet. Now he came out into a wide, flat solitude, where beneath the shadow of the trees grew nothing but dense clumps of the thorny acacia, resembling masses of our black-thorn. Now, again, he passed over miles of forest, beneath the trees of which grew myrtle-like shrubs as high as his horse, making all look monotonously green.

All was new to him. Finally, he found himself down in a low situation on the banks of a stream, whence extended great swamps, and where a thick growth of the black acacia gave to the place a most gloomy and lonely aspect.

"How is this? Where in the world can I be? This cannot be the Campaspe, and yet what other stream can there be? I am fairly bushed, and no mistake." Such were the thoughts of Charles as he stopped and looked round him on that desolate, disheartening scene. To cross the stream he found impossible, from the extensive marshes; and, though reluctantly, he turned his horse once more somewhat to the right, to gain higher ground.

Here arrived, and the rain clearing off, he dismounted, and determined to let his horse rest and feed, and to get some tea himself, for he was cold. But any one who has attempted to make a fire in the bush, when everything is soaked with rain, may understand that he had no easy task before him. He made many attempts to kindle the driest leaves he could find. It was useless; they only gave out volumes of smoke, and expired. He therefore sought the boles of the trees, to discover some loose-hanging bark on the lee side of the trunk which might have escaped the rain, and in this he at length succeeded, and raised a fire. Over this, as he sate warming

his chilled fingers, he pondered on the probability of his situation,—how he had got wrong,—on which side Moolap really could lie. But the more he thought, the more he was confused. Not a yard that he had passed ever since the rain commenced did he recognise. The whole country looked to him perfectly strange. What could be this stream? He was bewildered beyond extrication; and once flurried, all is over in such cases. North, south, east, and west, are all one. Still, come the worst; his horse and dog would carry him home again; but no! not so while a chance was left. He sprang up in desperation, and ran to the neighbouring slope of the hill, hoping that he might thence gain a view of the Campaspe valley. Not a glimpse of it; but only one wild forest without particular feature, one solitary, savage scene. He listened for a cock-crowing, an axe, the shout of bullock-driver to his team, or of dog barking at a flock. Not a sound, except of a tree-creeper near, ascending the bole of the tree with its unceasing note of "pee-pee-pee-pee."

Dispirited immensely by this view, he sighed deeply, and gave himself up for a night in the wet forest. The day was now fast declining, and which way he should turn he could not decide. At length he determined to remount, and cross this hill again

to the right hand, for he could not cross the stream on his left, and take the first track he found. He did so, but for a long time in vain. His horse continually turned southward, in which direction Charles believed lay his home; and on all such occasions Club grew sprightly, and with a toss of head began to run before. But Charles still resolutely turned his steed the other way, and at length he struck a track going off to the north. He looked; he thought he recognised the trees by the way-side; this must be the track, after all; and away he cantered once more. But it went on, and on, and on. He must have ridden five miles, and no house, no Moolap! Night was setting in, and once more the tempest came growling and roaring up. Presently it was pitch dark around him, not from absolute night, but from the black enveloping clouds of the rain storm. It was impossible to see his way; he left it to his horse, and his horse reluctantly went forward. All at once the forest was lit up by a tremendous blaze; there was a crash as if the welkin above his head was rent in sunder, a thundering, stunning explosion, and a large tree in an open space before him was at once dashed into a thousand pieces by a vivid blue shaft of lightning. The next moment, all was still and dark as a tomb. His horse had wheeled round at

the flash and terrible concussion, and dashed away hap-hazard through the woods. Probably it was a happy circumstance for him, for the splinters of the shivered tree flew on all sides with the fury of an exploded shell. He was nearly swept from the saddle by a depending branch, before he could stop the frightened mare; when he once more stood still, and gave himself up for the night. But what a night! The rain, after the discharge of the electric fluid, came drenching down in torrents. It was not rain, it was a deluge; one heavy, solid, drowning descent of water. Shelter from the thinly-foliaged gum-trees there was none; way there was none, for all was Egyptian darkness, and roaring, dashing, inundating water. The horse drooped its head to its knees, and seemed to give itself up to its miserable lot. The dog cowed under its stomach, and whined pitifully. Never was there a more wretched situation. "What would they think if they could know," thought Charles to himself, "at home? But they think me snug at Moolap. Heigho! I wish I were."

But at once the clouds broke, the wind swelled again, but blew more temperately. And what is that? A light! Yes; he caught the steady gleam of a light, be it what it might, a station, or a mere night camp in the forest; there were human beings there, and the

means of learning where he was; he rode on towards it. His horse evidently saw it too, and increased its speed. As he drew nearer he saw that it was no open fire, but the light from a window, steady and unmoved by the wind. "Hurrah!" thought he. "Moolap after all! I thought I could not be so far off."

He cantered joyfully onwards. Yes; the same old slab huts. He gave a loud cooée, and a crack of his whip, and at the same instant was at the door of the hut whence the light came, and a man stepped out of it. "Take my horse, mate," said Charles, "for I am nearly perished;" and leaping down, he was entering the hut. "The other way, master," said the man, "round the corner." Charles thought he was still bewildered. He neither recognised the man's voice nor the place, but he went round the corner, saw the chief building, also of wood, and the light streaming from its two windows.

"How is this?" he said. "It is odd, I do 'nt seem to know the place; my head must be turned." He entered, and stood amazed. Round a noble blazing fire of logs sate a gentleman, two ladies, and two boys; but they were not the Metcalfes. They were utter strangers. At the sight of him, they all rose to receive him. The gentleman was a stoutish man, of apparently fifty. He was dressed in a drab coat and

trousers, and a figured silk waistcoat, with turquoise buttons. His hair was still quite dark, no tinge of grey; his face marked by strong features, and a look of cleverness and decision.

"Come in, sir, come in; what a night for you! Why, you must be literally drowned. Let me pull away your outer garments."

"But first," said Charles, in some confusion; "pray tell me where I am; I thought I was at Moolap."

"At Moolap! That's a dozen miles up the river! But no wonder you missed your way in such a storm. Give me hold of your waterproof."

Charles stripped off his oil-skin and his dripping hat, and stood there a handsome and gentlemanly youth, but still with a puzzled look. Freed from his outer garments, and a seat placed for him by the fire, he saw that the ladies were mother and daughter, the mother a very kind-looking woman, and the daughter a very fine, handsome girl. The two boys, of apparently twelve and fourteen, stood and looked at their guest in silence.

"But where, then, am I," asked Charles, "if I may ask?"

"Why," said the gentleman, "you are at Bongubine, at Peter Martin's, and ıy welcome there,

too. Sara, my dear, get tea, and let us have some good steaks; I have no doubt this gentleman will be ready for them after his ride."

But as he spoke Charles started up. The strangest astonishment was in his face. He coloured scarlet, looked at one, and then at the other. Mr. Peter Martin! Mr. Peter Martin in this country! Mr. Peter Martin!—the man of all others that his father detested; the man whom Charles from his birth had been brought up to regard as the greatest and most persevering enemy of his family; the man whom to leave behind was the one reconciling idea of his father in quitting England for this far-off country! And he here! Come like a ghost to haunt their steps, to trouble their repose, to destroy the whole charm of this southland life!

"Excuse me," said Charles, stammering, and hardly knowing what he did. "Excuse me, I cannot stay. I beg pardon, I could not have imagined it possible." He turned to seize his wet waterproof clothes; they were gone out.

"What 's amiss?" said Mr. Peter Martin. "What ails you, young man? You cannot go out; there is no need, indeed, you are perfectly welcome."

"No, no," said Charles. "Good God! How unfortunate! I must go. At once! at once!"

"Good gracious!" said the gentleman. "Why, you have lost your wits in the storm. Go out to-night! Not for worlds. It is madness!"

"No matter; Oh! Heaven above us! Give me my coat;. I *must* go."

"But why, man? But why?" exclaimed the squatter vehemently, and as if at once astonished and insulted.

"Why?" said Charles. "O Lord! Why? Because you are Mr. Peter Martin, and I am Charles Fitzpatrick!"

"So—o!" said the squatter, stepping back in astonishment, and gazing fixedly at Charles. "So—o, that is it?"

Charles saw the ladies at once rise, colour excessively, and tremble with agitation as they gazed at him. They looked confounded with surprise.

"Charles Fitzpatrick!" again exclaimed Mr. Martin. "That is extraordinary. I can understand your feelings; but, a word! You look on me as the enemy of your house. I am its firmest friend; I always have been; I always will be, and that one day, and not a distant day now, both you and your father will acknowledge. And now, mark! I am a positive man; your father knows that, and you must now know it. You will sit down quietly

to-night. If you were my enemy, or I yours, I would set open the door and say, 'Go, and perish!' But, as your friend, I say you shall stay here till morning; I admit of no contradiction. Charles Fitzpatrick! Look on those two ladies; do they look like enemies, like bad people? They are your truest, kindest friends; and, whatever I look like, I am the same. You stay."

Charles looked at the ladies. They were both greatly agitated, but two more amiable-looking women no eye could fall upon. "God forbid!" said Charles, "that I should think so."

"Then shake hands, like a sensible lad." Charles took the proffered hands, and shook them cordially.

"There, there," said Mr. Peter Martin. "Now for tea, Sara. We shall know one another by morning."

Charles sate down, but silent, agitated by the strongest feelings. To have thus stumbled into the dwelling of a man that he had always heard named as the steady enemy of his father. To find him here, when he believed him in England. Not a word of his arrival in the colony to have reached them. And why here? For what object thus planted down near them?

The most painful feelings filled his whole mind;

and yet, when he looked about him, what more open and kindly aspects could he behold? There appeared nothing sinister, nothing to create a suspicious or a distrustful feeling. Could these be wicked or hostile people? .Never did he see persons who had a more attractive, trustworthy appearance. The very place seemed to have a kindly, genuine, domestic spirit about it. True, Mr. Peter Martin had a short, quick, confident manner; a prompt, decided sort of speech; but could he be a bad man? He did not look it. How could it be?

Whilst Charles was running over these thoughts in his mind, the squatter had gone out, and the daughter returned, followed by a servant with the tea-tray. Mrs. Martin asked Charles if he had been intending to reach Moolap; and, on his replying in the affirmative, he was astonished to perceive that she was perfectly acquainted with the Metcalfes, and the Woolstans too. Here was fresh cause for wonder: why had they never mentioned the Martins?

During tea, Mr. Martin, in the most friendly manner, asked Charles the particulars of his ride through the bush. He quickly cleared up the mystery of his deviation from the proper track; told him he had had a lucky escape; that he had been going off gradually north-eastward, and would

have come down into the immense plains leading to the Murray, and might have ridden for days without seeing a soul. He appeared to take such an honest, undisguised pleasure in Charles's escape, yet without any fussiness or overdone *empressement*, that Charles was still more amazed. He cleared up the mystery of the creek to the left, which, he said, was a sluggish, boggy stream that fell into the river. He offered, in the morning, to put him into the way to Moolap; but Charles said "he was bound for Mr. Farbrother's, beyond the Campaspe in reality, and perhaps might," he added, "be able to proceed thither from this place."

"Oh, my dear fellow!" said Mr. Peter Martin. "Why, you are all right. You are in the very way here. I will see you over the river to-morrow, if it can be crossed, which is doubtful, however, after these heavy rains."

Charles was still more in wonder at the ready, friendly spirit of the man, at this prompt offer of assistance; he could not reconcile it with all he had heard of the man's enmity; and yet his father, he recollected, had always angrily denounced his busy offers of advice, his poking his nose, as he called it, into other people's affairs. Again Charles looked at him and at the ladies; he was more mystified

than ever. All was so kind, so open, and affectionate amongst themselves. Could wickedness and malice put on such a truthful, home-like, beautiful aspect? It was totally beyond his comprehension.

CHAP. VIII.

THE RIDE ACROSS THE RIVER.

DURING the evening Charles Fitzpatrick had leisure, notwithstanding the excited state of his mind, to notice some of the circumstances about him. He perceived that the room in which they were was as humbly furnished as it was built. The bare slabs, indeed, which in such stations are most commonly bare, and presenting ample interstices, were here clothed with a remarkable paper, consisting of nothing less than a collection of the *Illustrated London News*, varied by a considerable sprinkling of *Punch*. These had been disposed so as to display to the eye the largest possible amount of pictures; so that the squatter's sitting-room was at once a library and a picture-gallery. There was a most amusing assemblage of scenes, some serious, some comic, always before the eye of the spectator, and no one need suffer *ennui* there; for, even if left alone, he had only to approach the walls, and look into almost every country of the known world, as well

as into the interior of the society of the most celebrated cities. There, at the antipodes, he could travel his own country, and laugh with his countrymen at public and private follies; having all the time innumerable columns of letterpress at his command to enlighten and amuse his mind.

Had he turned his attention to the floor, he would have seen its stout planks covered with a mat composed of sugar-bags which had been slit open and well scoured in the river. The fire-place — as universal in the bush, being constructed for the burning of wood and for not being burnt itself, for it was of wood too, like all the rest of the house — was at least four feet square, and lined for the same height with slabs of granite. On the hearth, instead of a dog for the burning logs to rest on, lay the great bush or box of a dray-wheel, and opposite to it a considerable oblong stone, and across these supports lay the fire.

There was a plain table, a wooden couch with a mattress upon it, by way of sofa, and a few very rude chairs. That was the furniture of the room, very much on a par with the state of other wealthy squatters, and quite magnificent compared with the abodes of many.

Mr. Peter Martin and his family, accustomed in

England to the comforts and elegancies of a great estate, yet appeared to have settled down here with all the composure of the most regular squatters in the rude simplicity of this bush-life. What could it mean? How had it come to pass?

When Charles was shown to his bed-room he was irresistibly impelled to renew his studies and observations there. This room opened by a very rude door from the sitting-room. It was small, and was papered in a much soberer style; that is to say, with *Chambers' Edinburgh Journals*, and these having fallen short, the deficiency was supplied by the leaves of copy-books, where pot-hooks and fish-hooks were leaning in all their school-boy degrees of obliquity, and were identified by the subscription of "Thomas Martin is my name, England is my nation," and by a grand display of pugnacious genius on the part of the other brother: —

> "This is Peter Martin's; let no one steal it,
> Or he will get a blow, and no doctor to heal it."

"Pretty well, that," said Charles, as he read it. "Chip of the old block, I reckon." There was a small bed at the end of the room, covered with a handsome, dark opossum rug; the bedside carpet was composed of about four yellow wild dog skins; the

dressing-table was an article in two parts, that is, it consisted of two large boxes set one on the other. The only seat was a kind of ottoman, which, on examination, proved to be a tea-chest, but softened by a cushion, and disguised by a valence. On the dressing-table, or dressing-boxes, stood a small looking-glass and two or three books, a small bible, a prayer-book, and a selection of poetry. But what revealed to Charles that he had been installed in Miss Martin's own quarters were a handsome new lady's sadle and bridle and riding-whip, which hung on the wall, presenting an odd mixture of bed-room and harness-room, but quite in keeping with bush-life. Where Miss Martin had bestowed herself remains unknown; but Charles felt that his sudden appearance had in some degree disturbed the domestic arrangements of the Bongubine station.

Charles turned into bed, but lay tossing for a long time from one side to another, still disturbed by the strange discovery he had so strangely made, and considering how he was to break the matter to his father. He pictured to himself his father's rage at learning that his most antagonistic aversion was here coolly and completely residing in his neighbourhood, and he hardly dared ask himself how he would accost him for staying all night with this detested family. At

length he dropped asleep, and was only awoke when it was broad daylight by a sound of laughter and struggling and romping, so close to him that the riot appeared to be in the very room. It was, however, behind a slender partition wall of wood, with the usual airy interstices, and the *dramatis personæ* consisted of the identical Peter and Thomas whom he had seen overnight, and whose pot-hooks helped to paper his own chamber.

The sounds that did not *catch* his ear, but which came plunging and rushing and gushing upon it were these:—"Yoé, hoé, hoé, ho! I say Peet! Peet! oh! dash your wig, Peet! Peet, I say! oh! oh! You are squeezing all the breath out of me!" Slap! bang! a tremendous cuffing and dusting of each other with pillars and bolsters. "Oh! oh! ha! ha! ha! bravo Tom! bravo! yo hoé, hoé, yo hoé, he! he! he!"—a regular, continuous, half-suffocated giggle, ending in a downright screech. Then slap, bang, cuff, dust, dash, tuzzle. "Aha! oho! there! there! Tom! Tom, I say, ha! ha! oho! oho! ho-o-o-o, ee-e-e! hoe,"—ending in another regular screech.

Then "Peet! Peet! I say, hush! hush! don't you remember that young Fitzpatrick 's sleeping in Sara's room? We shall wake him, if we don 't mind."

"Whew," a long significant whistle from Peet. "By jingo, Tom! I never thought of that; whist, we

did 'nt make much noise, did we? But I say, what an odd thing that he should stumble in here, eh? How deuced queer! And was 'nt he in a pretty taking; my eye, he was in a fluster! And did'nt the governor stare a bit when he said who he was! Bravo! it 's regular fun. I 'd give a farthing to see old Fitzpatrick when he tells him where he 's been."

"Ay, indeed, there 'll be the dibble — dibble, as the black fellows say, to pay. I would n't be in his shoes for a trifle."

"But, I say, Tom, the young fellow 's not bad-looking."

"Bad-looking, Peet! No; why should he? They 're a very handsome family, the Fitzpatricks, as you may judge from their cousins, that is, us, Peety, my boy."

"Oh nonsense! I don 't mean bad that way, but wild and wicked. You know very well what I mean."

"Oh yes! It is a pity old Fitzpatrick should have always been so wild, and so spent all his property. But that 's what the governor here always told him would come of it; and that 's why he hates father so."

"The more fool he. Well, he 's suffered for it; so don 't let us blame him; the governor does n't; he only says he 's very sorry, but that it will all come

right yet, and the old baronet will get all his property back; and that rascally Sir Peter may go to ——. I can't say where, though the governor slaps it out so flatly."

"Well, I'm glad all will come right, Peet; and father knows, so it's sure; he says, as sure as he lives, as sure as we're in Australia, and that he's here to bring it about. My word! I wish we were old enough to be let into the secret. Why the governor should take all this trouble, and why old Fitzpatrick should still go on hating him as he does, is a rum go, that's all I can say."

A sudden rap at an opposite side of the boys' room, and the sharp, quick voice of Mr. Peter Martin, calling out to them—"What are you monkeys gabbling at there? Dress, and come away!"—broke off this interesting conversation. There was a sudden silence, a quick drawing on of clothes, and the interlocutors were gone.

But what a world of strange sensations rushed over the mind of the listener. So! This was the view here taken of the family hostility. This was a very different version and view of the affair. Mr. Peter Martin, not the enemy, but the fast friend of the Fitzpatricks. Not disliked by his father for any impertinences or unkind actions, but for a faithful and

wise counselling. His father ruined by a constant opposition to the advice of Mr. Peter Martin; and, more wonderful still, all the losses of his property were yet to be done away with. His restoration to title and estate were certain. And Mr. Peter Martin was not only the confident prophet, but the agent, the active, friendly agent in it. This was marvellous! — how all his father's property could have been wrested from him by Sir Peter, and why no evidence could be procured from any quarter to stem the ruinous course of trial after trial; and yet Mr. Peter Martin, who then lay still as a mouse, should now be here and acting for a certain restoration of everything. These were problems upon problems which, so far from Charles's brain being able to solve them, only threw it into a greater whirl. He sate down on the bed, and sunk into a series of thoughts so deep that they deprived his body of all motion — almost of breath. Thus sate he long, and at length started up, and said to himself, "It must be true! There must be something in it! But what? My father shall have his own again! What can this man know? But he knows something; and it is good. He says he is our fast friend, and we shall know it too ere long. His boys say it! Ay! That is confirmation tenfold strong. That is plainly the daily established familiar

talk of the house. That was not meant for me. That was the spontaneous language of children, who listen and hoard up the household topics of their parents. God be praised! I have not come here for nothing. I believe it all. I feel that it is true. I thought I could not be mistaken in my impressions of these people. I shall give them my confidence. True, my father has been expensive, and fond of that fatal turf. He is strong-willed, and bears strong resentment. A fair, plain-spoken opposition on the part of this his relative, who appears a frank, shrewd sort of man, would very likely excite a vehement dislike to him in my father. Yes; it must be so. I feel it."

"Breakfast, my young friend, if you are ready for it," said the quick voice of Mr. Peter Martin, with an accompanying rap on the door.

"Thank you! quite ready," replied Charles. And pausing a moment to compose himself, he opened the door, and stepped out. There stood the breakfast table, near the front window, spread plentifully, and Mr. Martin and the two ladies advanced to bid him good morning. Charles took their offered hands with a cordiality which evidently highly gratified them. An expression of great pleasure appeared on their countenances. The cheeks of the ladies flushed with

a warm bloom, their eyes brightened, and they said they trusted he had slept well, and was no worse for his exposure to the rain.

Mr. Peter Martin rubbed his hands, seated himself at table, and began to deal about the steaks and cutlets, accompanied by a variety of chatty talk. Club came bounding into the room with the two boys, who declared that he was a most wonderful dog; that he had run ever so high up a slanting tree, and dragged a wild cat out, and had been down at the bottom of the river, and fetched up a particular stone they had thrown in. Mr. Peter Martin told Charles that his mare seemed all right, and had been well fed, and asked if he was still bent on his attempt to cross the river. "Certainly," said Charles, "if possible." "Then," said the squatter, "Tom, tell Jerridot to saddle me Blue-Beard; we will lose not an hour."

Charles begged that Mr. Martin would not think of incommoding himself by accompanying him. If he would send a man or one of his boys to show him the ford, that was all he desired. He entreated that he would do no more.

"Now, cousin Charles," said Mr. Martin, "if I may call you so, just say no more. You know I have the repute in your family of being a very pig-headed

man. You 'll find me so. Words are all lost upon me. I am going." This Mr. Martin accompanied by laying his hand on Charles's wrist firmly. Breakfast was soon over, amongst very kind and agreeable talk. Charles felt every moment more and more the wonder that his family and this should ever have been enemies. He looked at Mrs. Martin,—never did he see a matronly lady so motherly and agreeable; at Miss Martin,—never did he see a young lady at once so handsome, so sensible-looking, and so agreeable as she took part in the conversation, and joked with her brothers. She had a fine figure, vigorously yet not heavily built, above the middle height, a face in which a very beautiful and high-toned likeness to her father was visible. Charles felt as though he had been at home amongst these relatives for years, and thought how proud he should be to see the division of the families swept away, and Georgina and Sara love each other as sisters.

The horses were at the door. They mounted, and, amid cordial adieus, rode off. Mr. Martin was mounted on a powerful bay horse, and the two boys, on active ponies, accompanied them for some miles down the valley. On their return, Charles and Mr. Martin put their horses to their speed, and soon came down into the valley of the Campaspe. It

was amongst bold, steep slopes, covered with growth of large, old trees. Craggy precipices overhung the river, crowned also with noble trees, and the river itself wound along in a very circuitous course; here sweeping round a green forest promontory or bluff, and here encircled by high, hollow, solitary coombs. It was a region of much majesty and silence. All at once came the roar of water, and the turn of a hill showed them the river dashing over a natural weir, and enclosed by high cliffs, looking above the weir like a long, narrow lake, in which hundreds of water-fowl were swimming and sporting. Charles was transported at the scene; but Mr. Martin rode briskly on, and very soon the scene was totally changed. They came to where a water-mill stood by the river-side, with fowls and vehicles about it, and on a mound containing several acres stood a good brick house, in the midst of gardens and vineyards. Mr. Martin rode a little past this, and then paused on a rising ground to observe Charles's impression of the place. That was one of wonder and delight. All below this beautiful mound on which the house stood so deliciously, with the lofty wooded slopes, presenting around it a variety of changing aspects, opened a valley of the most soft and Elysian beauty. The hills on either hand, and others which rose up from

the bottom of the vale, were of the softest and most fairy-land forms. They were green as the emerald, and soft as velvet. A double row of bold red-gum-trees marked the tortuous course of the river along the vale, and the autumnal sun shone with an impa-radising lustre over the whole, as if emulous to present this Eden of the wilderness in its most at-tractive loveliness.

"Why, this is a heavenly spot," said Charles. "Whose station is this?"

"It belongs to mine," replied Mr. Martin. "This is called Lahni Mill; but more of that anon. At present we must push forward." They rode still for some miles, when, turning towards the river, they found themselves in a forest track which appeared to lead direct to it.

In a gloomy and rough scene, in strange contrast to the gentle beauty above, where rude mounds of earth overgrown with long grass and jungle were again overshadowed with large trees, they at once caught sight of the river, and a solitary tent stuck down amongst the bushes close to its approach. Mr. Martin appeared greatly surprised at the sight of this tent; checked his horse for a moment, and surveyed it in silence. Charles also looked closely at it, induced by the manner of his companion, but could perceive

nothing but a scarlet jacket with gilt basket buttons, hanging under a sort of canopy in front of the tent as if it had been wet through by the rains of the preceding evening, and a white horse singularly spotted with red grazing near. He could see or hear no person whatever. But Mr. Martin now rode quickly but carefully, keeping his horse cautiously on the grass, and the moment they were passed turning with a very meaning look, putting his fingers to his lips, as enjoining silence, and then riding rapidly forward. Charles, as he followed, could not help casting another backward glance, and was startled to perceive a huge figure and very hairy face protruded between the trees in front of the tent, and eagerly gazing after them. But he was obliged to bestow his immediate attention on his horse, as they were already riding in the water; yet he looked round once more,—there was nothing to see but a huge mass of bushes. Mr. Martin let him come alongside of him, and said, "That tent and dress and horse belong to a man that I would not for the world see us riding together. I'll tell you why some time; now let us get off as fast as we can." The river, however, now brought them to a stand; and what a scene!

It here spread itself over the wide flat of the val-

ley to the breadth of two hundred yards. All around was bushy, and shagged, and wild. The wintry torrents had brought down hither whole mountains of gravel and great stones mingled with the trunks of trees, and trees with enormous heads. These had intercepted fresh accessions of gravel, huge stones, beams, and carcasses of cattle. All amongst this chaos of debris rushed the headlong torrent, turbid and foaming, and roaring as it tore through these heaps of rugged obstructions. It was a wild and awe-inspiring scene. About three parts across it showed a clearer channel, where the current was swift as an arrow, and covered with foam.

Mr. Peter Martin stood with his horse nearly up to his shoulders in the flood, and said to Charles, "This is our crossing-place. What do you think of it?"

"This!" said Charles. "Is it possible that we can do it? Yon current looks as though it could sweep everything away."

"Of that I think least of all," replied his companion; "but in the flood amongst the gravel-heaps I dread the sunken logs and pieces of rock, which may throw down our horses where they may get so entangled in boughs as never to be able to rise again, or only to be washed away with us altogether.

But say the word! If your business is urgent we will try it."

"It is urgent," said Charles; "but I will not risk your safety."

"If that be all," said Mr. Peter Martin, "here goes." And he rode on boldly into the stream. Here he carefully held up his horse, encouraging him. Soon the stout horse lost footing, and swam vigorously; then again he caught ground, and struggled and floundered forward over roughest bottom. They were soon far in, Charles following carefully in his leader's track. As they approached the main current, Mr. Martin reined in his horse on a shoal, and stood a moment to survey the scene. It was enough to appal the stoutest heart. Nothing could be more wild, nothing more formidable in appearance. All round them stretched one great wide deluge, looking gigantic and merciless in its might. The muddy headlong waters rushed and roared along, working themselves against the huge heads of prostrate trees, which appeared partially above the flood with masses of yellow and dingy foam of a foot high. The waters of the main channel swept past in a heavy, careering torrent, which appeared capable of bearing anything to destruction.

"It won't do to look long on this," said Mr.

Martin; "we shall grow dizzy." He put on his horse, crying in the same instant, "Take heed!" And at once his horse stumbled over some trunk or rock beneath the water, and plunged headlong into the flood. Man and horse totally disappeared; and Charles's mare, startled at the sight, wheeled round and became restive. Horrified at what he had seen, Charles pulled round her head fiercely, and dug the spurs into her sides. With a furious bound she sprung forward, dashing the waters like a fountain high up all around him, and the next moment was also in the roaring, boiling gulph, battling with the waters with all her force. But her force! Against the immense weight of the furious stream it was as the force of a midge on the forehead of a tornado! Charles found himself swept down the raving torrent with the wild velocity of a frightful dream, the water washing over his very arms, while he strained his eyes in horror to discover his compa-ion. He saw only the raging flood whirling and tearing onward through the half-submerged trees. It was an age of strange agony to his feelings; though but an instant of time, when lo! the head of his companion's steed emerged, snorting powerfully, and driving the spray like steam from his nostrils. The next instant the stooping but still resolutely seated form of the

rider rose also from the flood, dripping with the deluge, and man and horse swept onward. The firm-hearted man had let go neither bridle-rein nor whip. Giving himself a vigorous shake, and blowing the water from his mouth and nose, he looked round, and perceiving Charles labouring to direct his horse athwart the current, he cried out clear and strong: "Heigh! let her go!" Charles dropped the rein on the mare's neck, and both the horses and the riders swept along with the mighty mass of waters.

Anon, Mr. Martin turned again, and pointing to a high shoal of gravel backed by a gigantic tree, he directed his horse thitherward in an oblique course. Bravo! They approach it easily. The first horse strikes the bottom. Another step, and he stands firm, but with distended nostrils and labouring flank, demonstrating that a little more and his immense strength would have been exhausted, and then adieu to both horse and rider. Charles felt his mare touch the shoal with a thrill of inexpressible joy, and the next moment the two travellers sate side by side, their hands grasped almost convulsively, and gazing on each other in speechless eloquence.

At length Mr. Peter Martin with a strong effort said: "Thank God for this. It is worse than I imagined: a narrow escape, indeed!"

"And that you should have risked your life for me!" said Charles.

"Pooh! No matter; I didn't mean to risk it, of course. It is an accident, or I should not have risked yours. My God! if you had been drowned, what would your father have said then? That I had drowned you on purpose! Oh Lord above! but never mind, all is right!" And with that he led the way over the gravel heaps, and through a few pools of shallow water to dry land.

"But now you will take your death in your wet clothes," said Charles.

"No; away with us now. Farbrother's station is only some quarter of a mile off." And he dashed forward at full gallop. Charles followed as fast, and in a very little time they were at the station, supplied with dry garments, and relating over a good dinner and a blazing fire the adventure of their passage of the river.

The travellers passed a pleasant evening at the station. The business which had brought them there was done at once. The document was signed and witnessed by Mr. Peter Martin; a fact the effect of which on his father, on first seeing it, Charles rather startled at on reflection, but which, after his experience

of this gentleman's devoted daring at the river, he resolved to justify and defend, if necessary.

But his thoughts were prevented from dwelling long on his own reflections; for Mr. Martin and Mr. Farbrother were soon afloat in a world of talk which immediately seized on the whole sympathy and imagination of Charles. Mr. Farbrother was, it soon appeared, a great traveller and an enthusiastic naturalist. He had his hut covered with cases of birds, beasts, and insects, all preserved and prepared by himself; and no sooner had Mr. Farbrother given them an excellent supper, and sent off three or four rosy children to bed, than he showed them splendid specimens of birds and beasts, and winged and creeping things which he had collected in every known part of Australia and Tasmania. Plants and stones in crowded cabinets and piled-up portfolios there were enough to detain them there for a month. In that wild corner of the bush he drew out Gould's magnificent work on the "Birds of Australia," and the parts, as far as they had reached the colony, of his equally fine engravings of the animals, and gave them such a succession of stories, the adventures in which he had been engaged in pursuit of his own treasures of natural history, as made Charles long to set out with him, and amid the trackless woods and mountains yet unnamed

hail all new additions to that family of extraordinary creatures. But time flew, the hour of midnight had arrived; and as the three friends, for friends they were grown in this brief space by the discussion of objects which deeply interested them all, sate enjoying a final pipe, Mr. Farbrother, who was just returned from an expedition in Tasmania, gave them a few reminiscences of some naturalist friends whom he had met there. To Dr. Müller, the accomplished botanist, he said he was indebted for the following account of the

" LAND-SHARK.

" In that wild region of mountains in Van Diemen's Land, called the Western Tier, which stretches north and south, over a large portion of that side of the island, and terminates only on the western coast, in high black precipices lashed by the booming billows of the ocean, two young men were travelling in the month of May, and lamenting that the fall of the year was about to put an end to their delightful wanderings. Through the long, light summer they had lived the life of nature and of freedom, which is the heaven of the hunter; and hunters they were, being naturalists—hunters of plants and of animals,

not for the mere pleasure of destroying or devouring them, but to widen the realm, and enrich the life, of science. The spirit of the chase was their soul and their life's blood. To pursue their object over sea, and moor, and mountain; to seek out, discover, and make prize of something new and curious, was the dream of their existence. To rush impetuously upon some unknown thing, as the hunter rushes upon his noblest game, and to stand on mountain peak or in forest glen with waving caps, and exulting 'juchhe!' as they stood before some beautiful object that never before gladdened the eye of naturalist, which yet had never found its name or its place in the books of the learned,—that was their glory and their reward. Young as they were, they had traversed many lands, in the frozen North, in the flowery South, in the vast and wonder-fraught realms of America; they had sailed on the Mississippi, the Amazon, and the Plate, and revelled in the exhaustless forests of Brazil. But here, at the antipodes, a Flora and a Fauna existed, exhibiting singular laws and modes of being, hitherto unknown to them. They had visited every quarter of the island, climbed the mountains, traced its shores, dived into the densest obscurity of its forests, and stretched themselves, when wearied, on the green

banks of its streams, counting up and putting in order their acquisitions.

"From day to day they drove their faithful pack-horse before them, burdened with bundles of their gatherings and their supplies, or left him in some luxurious nook, while they ascended hills, or explored woods. With the lowering sun they lit their fire at the foot of some tree or crag, raised a screen of boughs from the night-dew and the wind, and over their homely supper sung the songs of the Fatherland — for they were Teutons — and slept. From time to time, they found warmest welcome in country-homes, where manly men and fair women had brought the refined tastes and intelligence of European life, to blend them with the peace and freshness of a gracious southland nature. These happy and hospitable people almost invariably became their guides to new discoveries. With eagerest enthusiasm, men and women mounted their horses, and led the way to distant rock, river, mountain, or morass, where were to be found the peculiar productions of the district. And, for many a long year yet, will come back on their memories, snatches of romantic country, bits of solitary forest, the sounding shores of the ocean, the scalp of the naked hill overlooking worlds of woods, and illimitable sea, where the feathered hat and flying

veil led the way, — or some bewitching face flushed like a rose at the representation of some glorious new thing; or the manly form of the Tasmanian gentleman on his sure-footed steed, pioneered the track down the shelving declivity or across the rushing stream.

" But now their travel drew to a close, for the year drew to a close. The myriad flowers had disappeared, except the crimson epacris, and a few other natives of sheltered glades; and they were on their way homewards, warned by rains, and winds, and sharp nights.

"The scene in which they found themselves was wild and remote from life. They had made their way up profoundly silent and spectral forests, along the banks of the Mersey, rank with most luxuriant vegetation, over steepest rocks, and through the grimmest outlets of precipitous ravines, and to the lofty table-lands of the Tier.

" Their way was still through dreary forests, in the glades of which already lay patches of snow, where stringy bark-trees of such bulk and altitude still met their view as even, after all they had seen, awoke fresh astonishment. They were in search, as the evening came on wild and stormy, of a resting-place which they had occupied on a former occasion.

It was a rude hut erected of boughs and bark, probably by bushrangers or convicts who had fled hither at some time when government was keen in its pursuit of them. It was raised against the face of a rock in a little green glen which bordered a mountain lake, whose dark deep waters increased the awe-inspiring gloom of the scene. Having reached it, they turned out their tired horse, and proceeded to kindle a fire in their hut. Fritz, the younger, obtained a bright blaze of dead leaves and twigs in the chimney, which dazzled their eyes by its sudden lustre, and then fetched the tears into them by filling the place with smoke. But presently the flame bore the damp air upwards in the chimney, and all became clear; and the active Fritz was not long in cultivating the fire into a generous glow. Around the wretched tenement were seats formed of posts driven into the ground, supporting a rude framework of branches. These, covered with a mass of boughs and leaves of the gum-tree, were to constitute the beds of the travellers, as they had done those of their unknown predecessors.

"While Fritz was collecting this luxury, the professor, his companion, forgetting his learning and his early-won fame in the scientific world, drew from their baggage a small frying-pan, and a tin pan bear-

ing the familiar name of a billy, and proceeded to slice a solid piece of ham into the frying-pan. Anon, there commenced a lusty frying and crackling over the fire. Fritz brought in the billy full of water, and set it to boil; and the place with its two cheerful faces, and a very savoury smell floating through it, assumed a wondrously home-like aspect. Fritz, humming some favourite Studenten Lied, threw a handful of tea into the billy as it began to boil, set, on the nearest bed, tin pannikins and sugar, and the two comrades sate down to tea.

"The wind roared, as if it would carry the struggling trees all away together. Fritz declared it was dark even now, and they mutually congratulated themselves on having reached this shelter while it could be seen. But hark! at the moment that they were setting about to enjoy themselves, the sound of a horse's hoofs on the rocky ground caught their ear. At the same instant came the thump of a heavy whip or stick on the rude door, and a loud 'Hillo! there, within!' Fritz started up, and as he plucked open the hurdle, in stepped a tall man, stooping, as was needful, from the humility of the portal.

"'What! Fritz? what, mein lieber Herr Professor?' exclaimed a tall gentlemanly man, in dark green riding-coat and handsome jack-boots, vehe-

mently, shaking the hands of the strangers. 'Well, this is a surprise; though one ought not to be surprised to meet you in any savage spot. I saw a light here, to my great wonder, and determined to take refuge from the storm, though it were with bush-ranger or devil. Oh! what a night — dark as the lowest pit of Erebus, and with a suffocating wind, that sends the dead branches down about your ears in most perilous style. Had it not been for my faithful Jack, I must have given it up; but he tumbled along, courageously, over stock and stone.'

"'But what in the world,' said the two naturalists, 'leads you here, Doctor, in such a night? Sit down and tell us all about it, over a pannikin of tea.'

"'But, first, my horse! my poor Jack!' exclaimed the doctor, who was the medical man from a township, some twenty miles distant; and, stepping out, he brought up his horse to the light of the door, took off his saddle, girthed his own rug round his smoking body, and hung to his nose a little bag of oats that he had carried with him. This done, the three friends sat down, and commenced an animated conversation which ran through the recent adventures of the two friends and the doctor's too; who, it turned out, had been over the mountains to a new settlement, at a

most urgent call to a sick man, and a proportionate fee.

"'A case of life and death,' said he, 'and really almost of the same to the doctor. May the settlement flourish and set up its own surgeon; for I never wish to go there again. Fifty miles through these terrible ranges, on the edge of winter, is no trifle; one ought to make one's will before attempting it.'

"Here the doctor, seeing his horse had finished his oats, jumped up, and little Fritz, with a flaming brand, took the animal to be company for the naturalist's horse, in the little sheltered glen just by. Returned to the blazing fire, they once more blessed their stars for so opportune a shelter, drank pannikin after pannikin of tea, digested many a good slice of ham, and basked in luxuriant content in the glow of the ample fire.

"'This has been some robber's den, take my word for it,' said the doctor. 'Some desperate convict skulked here till he found means to get over to the other side, and the gold-fields. But what times these are to those of our fathers in the island! Then Musquito came down upon them with the enraged natives, and Michael Howe and his gang spread terror from the Tamar to the Derwent. There is a story—a wonderful one—told of those times, which few who

hear it will believe; yet, it is quite true, and has been mentioned by West in his history of the colony.

"'At the time when a heavy sum was offered for the capture of Howe, alive or dead, and when the desperate fellow was so hunted and laid wait for, that he was irritated to a state of deadly ferocity,—a convict happened to make his escape. He bolted to the woods in nothing but the bright yellow suit which the so-called canary-birds, the convicts, wear. He had made his way up the country, by venturing to approach shepherds and solitary stockmen, who were often of the class, and actuated by the fellow-feeling which makes "wondrous kind." From them he had procured damper enough to carry him on, and at length, arriving in the mountains, he encountered the celebrated bandit, at the head of a gang of his desperate followers.

"'"Eh, mate!" said Howe, "whither away?"

"'"To join the bushrangers," said the man; "I have made my escape."

"'"That won't pass, my friend," said Howe, pouncing savagely on the man. "This is a stale dodge;—won't do here; it has been tried too often. Rather tempting, eh?—that price on my head? But we've settled all that. The man that comes

here, dies; and so all's safe. Mate, here's a choice for you;—we don't wish to be too arbitrary. The cutlass, the pistol, or the contents of this little vial;" producing one from his waistcoat-pocket.

"'The poor fellow, thunderstruck with astonishment and terror, begged piteously for his life, protested over and over his innocence of any treason, and his desire to join them. In vain. The savage outlaw bade him cease his whining, and make his choice, or they would at once choose for him. The poor wretch selected the poison as the least appalling. They saw him swallow it off, wished him a comfortable doze, and disappeared in the wood. The potion began to take instantaneous effect. The man sank down, overcome with drowsiness, on a stump, and felt himself falling into an overpowering stupor. But the dose was too strong; it produced violent sickness, and the man, relieved, arose in a while, and marched on.

"'After travelling some hours, taking, as well as he knew, a direction widely different from that of the bushrangers, to his own and their astonishment, he found himself once more crossing their path.

"'"What!" exclaimed they, "are you not dead?"

"'The man fell on his knees, and prayed vehe-

mently for his life. It was useless. The choice of sword or pistol was again offered him, and as he continued to implore for mercy, crack went Howe's pistol, and the victim fell motionless on the ground.

"'But he was not yet killed. After a time he recovered consciousness, felt the top of his head smarting and burning terrifically, and his eyes blinded by blood. But his bodily strength and feeling of soundness were wholly undiminished. He rose, wiped the blood from his eyes, washed his head at a pool, and found that the ball had merely grazed his skull. Binding up his head with his handkerchief, he once more set forward, trusting this this time to steer clear of the merciless crew of bush-rangers. But no such good fortune attended him. After marching some miles through a most laborious mountain-track in a deep inland valley, he again saw, to his horror, the robber troop approaching. It was too late to conceal himself; they already saw him; and he heard distinctly the shout of wonder that they raised on perceiving him.

"'"What!" exclaimed the terrible Howe, "still alive? Will neither poison nor bullet destroy thee? Why, thou art a cat-o'-mountain, with not nine, but any number of lives at the devil's need. Art thou man, or ghost, or fiend?"

"'The poor wretch once more, and still more movingly, pleaded for his life.

"'"What had he done?" he asked. "He wanted only to join them, and he would be their slave, their fag, their pack-horse, their forlorn hope in any desperate cases—anything, so that they only let him live."

"'"Live!" exclaimed the barbarous leader; "live! Why, thou livest in spite of me! Neither fire nor physic harm thee! Nay, I would kill thee, if it were only to see what it takes to do it. I have a curiosity to know whether thou canst be killed, or whether thou art not the Wandering Jew, or Old Nick himself." With these words, listening no more to the tears and entreaties of the man than if he had been a hyena, he devoted him to the infernal powers in familiar language, and, stabbing him with his cutlass, said, "Take that!"

"'The man struggled violently on the ground for a few seconds, and then lay still on the sand.

"'"That's a settler, I think," said the outlaw, whose hand had executed worse horrors than even that, since he had been hunted and bidden for by government; burning secluded families in their own huts at midnight, and making solitary travellers run a race for their lives as a mark for the rifles of his

men. "If the fellow comes to life again," he said, coolly, "I must get his secret, for it is very likely to be useful to me." Wiping his cutlass, first on some long grass that he pulled up, and then on his coat-sleeve, he coolly marched away with his crew.'

"'And that certainly must have been a settler,' said the professor.

"'By no means,' added the doctor. 'After a time the convict returned to consciousness. Fearfully weak, he was tormented with a burning thirst; but was still alive. With much effort, and various faintings, he managed to crawl in the direction of a stream that ran riotously and sonorously down the rocky valley, and there quenched his burning thirst in the deliciously cold water. Again exhausted, he sank back on the bank; and would no doubt have perished, had not a stockman come in quest of stray cattle. He removed him to his hut, having first bound up the wound in his chest; and, after a long period of illness and debility, the man was once more well, and determined to return, and deliver himself up to the authorities at Hobart Town, where, you may be sure, his story, and the confirmatory scars upon him, excited an immense sensation.'

"'But how could the man survive a thrust through the body?' said the professor in amazement.

"'It was a mere case of loss of blood,' replied the doctor; 'the weapon had luckily passed between the ribs without touching any vital part, and the man had swooned from agony and hæmorrhage.'

"'Horrid times!' ejaculated Fritz. 'In those days of unnatural history, natural history, of course, was not. Only think of stumbling on Musquito or Howe, who may be called the Tasmanian Alexander the Great; for, literally—

"'"Thrice he fought his battles o'er,
And thrice he slew the slain."'

"'Fie, Fritz!' said the doctor, laughing. 'Yet, even in my early days, here I botanised and entomologised. And that was the sole cause of my encountering any danger, or being compelled to shed blood.'

"'To shed blood!' simultaneously exclaimed his hearers.

"A serious cloud passed over the worthy doctor's features, and in a different tone he added: 'Yes! In all my rough and solitary rides in this insular depôt of excited ruffians; in all my night wanderings, when called, as must be the case, to often distant abodes, in the very worst parts of the island; I have always found my profession and my errand an infallible safeguard. Whenever I have been stopped by

outlawed fellows, whose very name and fame all over the island were a horror, to their demand of "Who goes there?" my reply, "The Doctor," brought the instant rejoinder—"All right! Go, in God's name, doctor!" Nay, these very fellows have, on many an occasion, been my guides, conducting me by ways known only to themselves, confident that I would never betray them. To them I owe a knowledge of passes and short cuts through these hills that no man besides is acquainted with. I have often received refreshments from these fierce outcasts of humanity, when I was ready to faint with exhaustion; more than once I have even slept all night in their rude huts in the mountains, feeling the profoundest security in guards who had the repute of being destitute of all feelings but the most diabolical. I have attended them in their sickness or their wounds, and I have seen and heard revelations by the death-beds of robbers and murderers that would draw tears from a stone. Oh! if the world did but know what glorious faculties and feelings might be cultivated in youth, in the poorest and most abject of our population—toads and deformed reptiles as they afterwards appear to us, yet in whose heads and hearts God has originally deposited the precious jewel of a great and capable nature—many a man who has

come hither leprous with crime, and venomous as a trodden serpent, would have remained at home to adorn society, and to accelerate its progress towards higher knowledge and a nobler standard of opinion.'

"'But what was the exception?'

"'This: I had but little to do, and I made long rambles, devoting those attentions to insects which were not required by patients. In one of these, I entered a new township in a remote situation, and stopped for the night at an inn still but partly furnished. I observed that my bedroom had no lock, but that was too common to give me any concern. But, having deposited in this room when I had gone up, on entering, to wash my hands, a brace of pistols, and a small morocco case in which I carried my insects, I observed that these articles had been removed and replaced in a very different manner. I examined the pistols, and found, to my surprise, that they had been both unloaded, and that water had been poured into them. This gave me a strange sensation, and it occurred to me that my insect case had been supposed to contain money, and that there was a design to rob me. It was too late to quit the house without notice, and without running greater risk outside than in the room itself. I carefully wiped dry and reloaded the pistols, drew with as

little noise as possible a heavy chest of drawers against the door, and threw myself down in my clothes, anxiously waiting for the anticipated attack. It came. About midnight, I heard something at the door—force applied to push back the obstruction. My candle had burnt out; but I exclaimed, "Who's there?"

"'"Oh! are you awake?" said a man's voice, which I supposed that of the landlord; "I want to come in for some bed linen in the drawers—a guest has just arrived, and we can't do without it."

"'I told him nobody should come in on any account till morning. The man swore that he must and would, and proceeded to push violently at the door. On this I started up and cried, "Desist! or take the consequences; whoever comes in here is a dead man!" But the man—and he was a huge, brawny fellow—swore dreadful oaths that he would come in; and, as he furiously thrust open the door, I fired.'

"'Mein Gott!' exclaimed the two German gentlemen, recurring in their excitement to their native tongue, though they usually spoke English like Englishmen.

"'Yes,' continued the doctor; 'he fell, I heard a groan. I could see nothing, but I heard a great running on the stairs, and low, suppressed exclama-

tions of horror, and whisperings. Then all was still, and I remained in a condition which you may imagine till morning. No one came near the chamber. At daybreak I pushed away the drawers, looked out, expecting to see a frightful stain of blood, but all was clean — the floor had been carefully scoured.

"'I descended. There was no one to be seen but a girl, who looked at me with a sort of stupid wonder. I asked what I owed, paid it to her, and walked away. No one appeared to oppose or to question me. It seemed all like a horrible dream. As I ascended the village, a man began tolling a bell which hung in a tree by a new wooden chapel. I asked what that meant.'

"'"It is the passing-bell," said the man, "for the landlord down yonder, who died suddenly in the night."

"'The words struck me like an actual blow; I went on — no one pursued me — no one ever afterwards spoke or seemed to know of the affair. A short time ago I was in that neighbourhood. The place is become a great town; a new family is in the inn, which is one of extensive business. I ventured to ask if such a tradition did not exist? No one had heard a syllable about it.'

"'You had a narrow escape, doctor,' said his wondering friends.

"'Ay; and what would I now give if I had but told that dishonest landlord that I had discovered his trick, and that my pistols were once more loaded? It was his conviction that they were empty which made him secure.'

"'No doubt of it,' replied the professor, 'and enabled you to rid the country of a monster who would have victimised others if he even failed with you.'

"'That is my only comfort,' said the doctor, musingly; 'but we must soon to bed, and before I can do that, I must relieve my mind of another scene, which I can only effect by giving it words, and thus insure my sleep. I have just witnessed the end of one of those extraordinary animals which it requires the air of Europe, and that of new colonies combined, to produce.'

"'What animal can that be?' asked the naturalists, their attention excited by the expectation of some novelty in their own region of inquiry.

"'It is the land-shark,' said the doctor.

"'The land-shark!' said the eager expectants, laughing; 'that must be a *lusus naturæ*, a nondescript, indeed.'

"'No,' replied the doctor; 'it is a creature well

known, accurately described and classified; no sport of nature, but the offspring of colonial life and of the spirit of modern Europe. You have seen the Tasmanian devil—a furious beast that will devour its own species when wounded. The land-shark is even a worse devourer of his kind. You have seen how horses here will paw up and devour earth on which salt has been spilled?'

"'Yes,' said Fritz, merrily; 'I know that to my cost; for many a time have I had to rise and rush forth in the night, and, undressed, chase away into the bush wretched horses who were champing, and pawing, and snorting close to our tent, where we had poured out the salt water from pickled beef.'

"'Well,' continued the doctor, 'the land-shark swallows up earth by acres and leagues; the wehr-wolf of Scandinavian legends never had such a capacity for the marvellous in deglutition. Australia has produced no lion, tiger, grizzly bear, or such ferocious monsters, but it has produced the land-shark, and that is a *monstrum horrendum* worse than all of them put together. It is worse, because it wears the shape of a man; and, with a face as innocent, as meek, and placid as a manticora or a syren, takes shelter under human laws. In a word, a land-shark is a thing which combines all the attributes of the incubus,

the cannibal, the vampire, and the choke-damp. Where it lives nobody else can live. It is the upas-tree become animated, and, walking over the southern world like a new Frankenstein, producing stagnation, distortion, death-in-life, and desolation wherever it arrives. It is the regrater and forestaller of the old world, against whose inhuman practice so many statutes have been enacted, thus turned up as the opponent of Providence in a new sphere. It is the meal-worm of the shop converted by what it feeds on into the hungry caterpillar of these lands.

"'I have to-day stood by the death-bed of a primate of this class. Peter Stonecrop was one of the earliest inhabitants of this colony, and his death will make a sensation. Of his beginning, which must have been tolerably obscure, I know nothing; but he was an illiterate man, and sordid from the first known of him. He got a large grant of land here, when grants were going as freely as the winds or the clouds. He never cultivated it. He bought more land—cheap, dog cheap—but he never cultivated it. What he got he kept, for he spent nothing. A hut scarcely fit for a labourer was his sole abode. He never could afford to marry. He was in this respect more penurious than Long Clarke, a congener, and the prince of land-sharks.

"'Peter Stonecrop is little behind his celebrated chief, I mean in accumulation of lands. Though to-day he possesses but some six feet of earth, yesterday he was lord of fifty thousand acres. In one respect his influence has been more mischievous than Clarke's; for he has contrived to pitch, with a singular foresight, on a whole host of places that must, in the nature of things, become populous and influential. Where a port was needed, they had to repurchase the site from Stonecrop, at cent. per cent. cost. Where a town should spring up, the purchases of Stonecrop stood in the way, and turned the tide of building into a far worse position. Where families longed to settle, and saw in imagination fertile farms, and happy homes, Stonecrop had put his hand on the waste, and a waste it remained. Thus have this man and his congeners gone on obstructing settlement, distorting progress, pushing back from the warm sunshine of existence thousands of human creatures, because there was no place for them in the new and beautiful lands which God has revealed to the destitute masses of crowded Europe. Imagine Battery Point, in Hobart Town, with its magnificent situation on the estuary, and in the very centre of the new metropolis, being bought by the father of the present excellent Kermode for eight hundred pounds. Imagine

what it is worth now, with its sites, its buildings, its capabilities, nay, its necessities—every foot of earth precious as so much gold-dust. It is such startling, prominent, exciting spectacles, that have created the tribe of voracious, yet indigesting land-sharks. But it is in Victoria that the race and the mischief have at length culminated. There the in-rushing torrents of gold-seekers have found the squatter and the land-shark in a coalition terrible as an antarctic frost. What the one was reluctantly compelled to let go, the other seized. The land-shark was before the population, but certain of its arrival, purchasing up large tracts when they were to be had. Wherever the government offered modicums of land to the clamorous public, the land-shark was there, and out-bid them, because he could wait, and knew that the higher the pressure of population the higher the price. You are no strangers to the outcries on that side the Straits for land; the indignant remonstrance and the reflux of despairing emigrants from those fair and fertile shores, where the squatter and the land-shark reign—the lords of a monopoly that amazes all wise men, and fills the valleys and prairies of America with millions on millions of people meant by Providence for the planters and forefathers of a glorious England of the south. You will yet hear, if this un-

holy alliance be not speedily cancelled, of woful tempests of vainly-repressed passion, and melancholy chronicles of bloodshed.

"'Adelaide is the only Australian colony which, warned by the vicinity of the prowling monster, has guarded against him, and has offered to the small capitalist the opportunity of securing small farms; and it has seen its reward in a numerous, increasing, thriving, and happy rural population, capable already of sending out surplus produce to the incubus-ridden Victoria. But to my man.

"'Peter Stonecrop was one of my very first patients, and he taught me one of my earliest lessons of caution. He came to me with a violent inflammation of the pleura. He doubtless selected me, as a young, and, as he hoped, a cheap practitioner. He actually passed on his way a much nearer and very able medical man, and, in agonies which nothing but the intensest avarice could have enabled him to endure, arrived at my door. Any other individual would have sent for a medical man to come to him, but his penurious soul would not allow him such a luxury. I opened my door, and saw him seated on a white, bony steed. I involuntarily thought of Death upon the pale horse; such was his ghastly and tortured aspect.

"'I took him in, doctored, nursed, and kept him for a month. As he grew nearly well, he began to talk to me of my practice and prospects; said he knew it was anxious and up-hill work for a young man in a new place. I candidly confessed it was, and he sympathised—as I thought, feelingly—with me. He frequently shook his head seriously, muttered, "Yes; hard work, very hard work: but we must help one another. My good doctor, let me know what I owe you. You've been very kind to me, and I hope I shall show myself sensible of it."

"'My impression was that he meant to make me some handsome present—something correspondent to his ample fortune, and the services I had rendered him. I therefore was careful to charge him as moderately as possible. I felt bound to rely on his generosity. He took his bill, paid me exactly to the farthing, called for his horse, and rode off. The land-shark and the miser are one.

"'Twenty years have flown since then. Old age has only bent his iron frame nearer to the earth which held his soul. If ever there was a thing of the earth, earthy, it was Stonecrop. Like Mammon,—

"'"The least erected spirit that fell,
From Heaven, for even in Heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent"—

Stonecrop seemed only to see the earth, and be conscious of its existence. Whether he ever saw the sky, with its translucent and inspiring universe of suns and worlds, is doubtful, but certainly it never suggested to him vast colonies of spiritual life, and all the sublime thoughts that claim for us kinship with the Infinite. From time to time sad stories of hard dealings and oppressive acts towards widows and orphans, over whose property he had extended his mortgage-net, reached the public, and of wondrous sums of money, of no more real use to him than so many oyster-shells. From the day that I restored him to a worthless life, he never came again under my hands, and never did me the slightest kindness.

"'Yet, the other day came a messenger with hot haste to call me to him. Stonecrop, he said, was dying, or feared so. A new settlement was laid out on the western coast, the vultures of speculation had already flocked there, and Stonecrop was first in the field. He had pounced on various lots just where an acute surveyor should have reserved them for the public. He had possessed himself of the only sites for quays and wharves, for the erection of a church, and for the supply of spring water. He had managed to monopolise woodlands, just where their magnifi-

cent timber was at hand for exportation. If they wanted a market they must re-buy it of him.

"'From what the man could tell me, I perceived that the very complaint of which I had formerly relieved him, had seized him once more in his old age. I believed his time was come, but I did not feel justified in refusing his call under such solemn circumstances, where no other aid was to be got; I resolved, however, to make a stand for some fair remuneration this time. When the messenger saw I hesitated to undertake the journey, he pulled from his pocket an open note. It was in Stonecrop's own scraggy, scrambling hand, now almost illegible from feebleness; but it offered large terms, which showed that he doubted of my coming. I wrote at the foot of the note that I accepted them, and made the messenger witness it. We went.

"'When we descended into this new township it was evening, almost dark, and there was a fog so thick that, as my guide said, "you might almost hang your hat up on it." We made our way through roods of mire a yard deep, ploughed up by bullock-teams; and piles of sawn timber, and trunks of felled trees, amongst blazing fires that blinded us, when near, and which gave us no help at a distance for the dense haze. In the midst of all the indescrib-

able confusion, discomfort, and ugliness of such a nascent settlement, we found our great man, domiciled in a mere shed, which had been erected by some sawyers. There he had cooked for himself; and, if one might jest on such a subject, had literally taken in and done for himself. The dampness of that low, hollow spot, and the incessant rains, had again produced a pleurisy.

"'A kind-hearted woman, the wife of a drayman just by, had gone in at his cries, and nursed him to the best of her ability. She described his agonies and moans as having been terrible; and when I said, "but he is still now," she gave a look full of meaning, and said:

"'"Yes, and to my thinking will soon be stiller."

"'I went in. A candle burnt on a deal box, besides the bedstead, the only furniture of the hut. The wretched man lay wide awake, watching with a keen look the doorway, and as I advanced, he lifted up his right hand, and said:

"'"That 's you, doctor; but I 'm better; we were in too great a hurry. You 'll consider that, eh?"

"'"You are better, you think?"

"'"O, much better! my pains are gone. They were shocking, shocking. If I could but move my legs—but they seem to be lead. Yet what can ail them? I am better, much better."

"'During this time I was feeling his pulse. He watched me with a look which betrayed a far deeper anxiety than his words would indicate. I put down his arm quietly, and sate in solemn silence on a rude stool, which the woman brought me to his bedside.

"'"You think me better, doctor, do n't you?" said the wasted old man, with a ghastly and eager look. "You must think so, I am so easy now."

"'"Mr. Stonecrop," I said, in a tone to prepare him as well as I could for the truth, "you are now an old man, and no circumstance should take you by surprise, especially where it concerns your most important affairs. You are easy; thank God for it; but do n't calculate upon that as delaying the crisis at which we must all arrive. I cannot flatter you with hopes of recovery."

"'The thin, prominent features of the dying man, which looked wan and bloodless before, at these words grew livid. His eyes glared on me with a fearful expression, their white gleaming with a strange largeness and glaziness. He clutched me by the sleeve with his big, bony hand, which yet seemed to retain an iron grasp.

"'"But you do n't think I shall die soon? Not for some days, weeks, months? No, no, I cannot die, I have so much to do."

"'"Let me speak plainly to you," I added. "If you have so much to do, you have little time to do it in. Your hours, nay, your minutes, are numbered."

"' At these words, he lay for a few moments, as if stunned. Then, dragging hard at my sleeve, he exclaimed, in a fearful, gasping voice, between a screech and a whisper:

"'"No, no, doctor, you must not say that! You won't say that! Save me! Save me! and take half my land."

"'"Not all the land on earth," I said, "could save you for a second beyond the two short hours that the progress of your disease has marked out for you."

"'"But you must save me, doctor. You can do it; you did it before. Think what I have to do; what affairs I have unsettled. And that Widow Tredgold, who prayed that I might never see her mortgaged fields again — what won't she say? A judgment she'll call it. No, no, doctor, save me! Say but the word, and I'll forgive the widow all. And those Hexham's children — them, too — them, too! O Lord! O Lord! who would have to do with widows and orphans? A man has no chance. There is no driving a bargain with them with any comfort — only trouble,—trouble,—trouble! But let them do just as they like. Doctor, say the word, and I'll build a

church here. They'll want one. Say it at once, doctor. I can't die, for I have so much—so very much to do!"

"'"Have you made your will?"

"'"'No—yes, I once did. I left my nephew the land, and my two nieces the houses and the money. But it would not do. When I looked on my lands they seemed no longer mine. These, I said, are Tom's; and when I looked at the houses and securities, these, I said, are Mary's and Jane's. No, no; they were no longer mine. I could not feel them mine, and I tore up the will."

"'"'You must make another."

"'"'Yes, yes, doctor—you'll give me time for that? Oh, I have much—so very much to do!"

"'I gave the woman instructions to fetch in pen and paper, quickly; but such things are not soon procured in such a spot. When she was gone, I added: "And your Maker, who has crowned you with so much of his wealth, how stand your preparations with him?"

"'"'Time enough for that, doctor. Let us make the will first. That's the first thing—that must be done first."

"'He endeavoured to turn himself, as if to be ready to dictate; but sudden spasms seized him; he

gasped for breath; clutched convulsively my sleeve; groaned, his head fell back, and with a deep sigh, saying half audibly, "I have so much to do!" the days of the great owner of many lands were over. The shrewd foreseer of events, the sagacious speculator, the keen safe bargainer, died, with his chief work unaccomplished—the grand bargain of existence unsecured!

"'It has required the sharp ride of to-day, over rock, and stone, and fallen trunk, up steep jagged acclivities, and over many a mile of dark mountain forest, amid the moaning winds and the snapping boughs, to dissipate the black impression of that death-bed. But now for a sleep!'

"The three friends threw themselves on their hard couches; and, at break of day, were travelling through a region of magnificent mountains, with a bright sun beaming above them amid flying clouds, towards the hospitable home of the accomplished and popular Æsculapius."

It was late when our travellers turned into bed, and Charles awoke in the morning with the strangest confusion of half-remembered dreams of more and odder creatures than ever took refuge in Noah's ark, mingled with ever-recurring bands of bush-rangers, and

doctors traversing the wildest mountains to carry aid, if possible, to moribund land-sharks.

Towards noon the river was considerably fallen, and the squatter conducted his guests to a ford higher up, which was much easier to those who knew it. In good time that afternoon they were once more safe at Bongubine. One more night Charles was compelled to pass there; and the following morning he left the house of Mr. Peter Martin, the reputed enemy of his family, with the warm and deeply-rooted conviction that he and his were amongst the most sterling and loveable people on the earth. But he was not suffered to proceed alone. Once more Mr. Martin mounted and set out with him. They rode on till they reached the height above Tallangetta, and the conversation had been such as had enchained the ear of the younger man to the voice of the elder one, as if there had been a more than human fascination in it. Mr. Martin went over the grounds of difference between himself and his father. He reminded Charles that he and Thomas Fitzpatrick his father were sisters' sons; that his own mother had died early, leaving him in charge of Lady Fitzpatrick; his father had been long deceased. The sisters had been bound to each other with a most tender and devoted attachment. Lady Fitzpatrick had regarded him with an affection

little short of that which she entertained for her own children. He and Thomas Fitzpatrick had been at school and college together; they had been the best of friends till near manhood, when Mr. Fitzpatrick's fatal passion for the turf had displayed itself, to the deep grief and alarm of his parents and relatives. Then they took diverse ways. For himself, he detested everything belonging to gambling, but the gambling of the course above all other. He recoiled in disgust from the society of that class. He took especial delight in the cultivation of his estate, and the enjoyment of his library. His Homer, his Xenophon, and his Cicero were his favourite companions. Mr. Fitzpatrick came very young into possession of his large property and title, and the result was too well known. His mother sought sympathy in his, Mr. Martin's, society, for he loved her as a mother. To him she confided her sorrows and fears, and to the day of her death she was firm and unshaken in her friendship for him. Meantime the most hostile feelings had grown up towards him in Sir Thomas. Perhaps he himself had not been destitute of blame in evincing too much anger and indignation in his warnings and entreaties to Sir Thomas, both as commissioned by his mother, or as proffered by himself. But before Lady Fitzpatrick

died, she foretold extraordinary ruin and misery to her son, and took a solemn pledge from him, her nephew, never to forsake him, and to spare no pains or sacrifices finally to save him.

"And yet," Charles ventured to say, "when my father was attacked and borne down by the pretender, Sir Patrick, you never came forward with any tender of evidence or funds. That is what embitters my father especially, and which none of us can understand."

"There," continued Mr. Peter Martin, "appearances are clearly against me. But evidence I had none, and funds your father would, under our then relations, have rejected with scorn. Besides, I was pledged by his own mother, who, with all her unquestionable affection, was one of the most firm and far-seeing women that ever lived, not to move in any way up to a certain crisis."

"And what crisis was that?" asked Charles.

"The crisis of utter loss of fortune, and the reaction of mind which should follow it. Your noble-hearted grandmother, while she mourned bitterly over her son, and went sorrowfully towards the grave on his account, believed that nothing short of such a crisis could effectually root the dominant, absorbing pas-

sion from his soul, and give free play to the exalted qualities which there withered in its shade."

"But the marriage certificate," said Charles, "can you say where that is? For without that I can see no ground for the hopes of my father's restoration to his rights, which I believe you entertain."

"No! God knows where that can be! Yet sometimes I have my thoughts about that; but you forget, there is yet a chance besides that — a chance of the discovery of the chaplain who celebrated the marriage."

Charles sighed. "A poor chance, indeed, I fear. Every effort to trace him has failed, and we are not very likely to discover him in these woods."

"I would not even say that," added Mr. Martin; "there is a strange gathering of all the ends of the earth here."

Charles shook his head; and after a considerable pause, he said: "And may I ask what induced you to come out here?"

"That is a point I wished to come to," added Mr. Peter Martin. "It was in obedience to the pledge which I gave to your grandmother. It was to secure your safety and return."

"Safety!" said Charles. "I imagine we are safe

enough here, at all events. Sir Patrick will not trouble himself to follow us hither."

"You are safe while I am here," said Mr. Martin, solemnly; "if I said you would not be so were I away, would you believe me?"

Charles paused a moment; the remembrance of this strange man putting his life in peril in the flood came over his mind, and he said, "Certainly; I would believe you as I would believe my own senses."

"Then believe that I watch over you, and that the time comes on amain which will show that, and will clear up everything."

He put out his hand, grasped the young man's vigorously, wheeled round his horse, and dashed away through the woods.

CHAP. IX.

THE STORM BREAKS.

CHARLES FITZPATRICK rode down the hill towards his gloriously-situated home, not as if he was returning joyfully from a successfully executed mission, but as if some heavy tidings retarded his reluctant course. The words of his extraordinary companion were still sounding in his ears. The strange past, the strangely-predicted and fast-approaching future, engrossed his whole mind. What a mystery there was about this man; and yet what a truth he felt was in him. How his very words — that he was watching over them — tallied with the words of the mysterious message. And what could be this danger which he intimated, and which he was here to control? It was all unreal as a dream, and yet to him more real than any other reality. So completely was he living in the heart of this mystery, that the beautiful lake, the wide woods and hazy peaks of mountains rising far distant out of them, the smoking huts below, and the white walls of his own home,

were unseen and unthought of by him; and it was only when coming near that the apprehension of his father's anger, on the discovery of the proximity of this his old antagonist, fell over him. He put his mare into a canter, and came up to the door with the liveliest air that he could assume.

At the sound of his horse's hoofs there were eager faces at the window; and in another moment his father, mother, and sister were all at the door with words of most affectionate welcome. "What luck?" exclaimed his father. "All right," Charles replied, dismounting, and flinging his bridle to the groom. Speedily he was seated in the midst of his family circle, who were full of inquiries regarding his journey; and, to put off the evil hour, Charles related the occurrence of the storm, and the difficulty of crossing the river. He added that Mr. Farbrother signed the agreement at once, and he then handed it in an off-hand way to his father. Mr. Fitzpatrick took it, just opened it, saw the signature of Mr. Farbrother, rose, put the document into his desk, and sate down again to listen to his son's story. Dinner came in, and they all sate down to it in great joy. There appeared every prospect of a delightful evening; all were so deeply interested in Charles's dangers in the woods and floods. But such prospect

was fallacious, it could not endure. They began to inquire after the Metcalfes, and how Bell was, and whether Brady had accompanied him across the Campaspe. Alas! at every fresh question Charles's countenance fell, cloud followed on cloud, and he was obliged to confess that he had not reached Moolap, but a strange station.

"A strange station! What could that be?"

"Oh, a station called Bongubine."

"Bongubine! A good name — native they supposed. And who lived there?"

"A family of the name of Martin — a very decent family."

"Martin! how odd! What sort of people were they? — cultivated people?"

Mr. Fitzpatrick started up, went to the desk, took out the agreement, unfolded it, and stood for some time as if he were in a dream.

Then, holding out the paper towards Charles, he said, in a stern sort of voice, "Who is the man who witnessed this? Was this the squatter of Bongubine?"

"The same," said Charles, unable to conceal a tremor which shook every limb.

"The same!" exclaimed his father. "What kind of man was he? Peter Martin! Who is he?

There was a sudden shock at the name which went through the ladies like that from a galvanic battery, and a short exclamation as of terror. All turned pale, while Mr. Fitzpatrick, on the contrary, grew scarlet, as with passion.

"Speak, Charles, at once. Who is this man who bears so devilish a name, and bears it so near us?"

Charles felt that he was on the edge of a crater; but there was no escaping. He manned himself for the explosion, and said, as deprecatingly as possible, "Dear father, I am sorry, for your sake, to say that it is the very man who has always borne that name."

There was a wild shriek now from the ladies, simultaneously. They all sprang up in horror, and Mr. Fitzpatrick stood convulsed with rage in a manner that was most frightful to witness. His hand clutched the paper in spasmodic fury. His face was swollen and distorted. His eyes rolled and blazed with frenzy; his mouth worked with the most hideous action; he ground his teeth, but uttered not a word.

His wife and sister rushed towards him in terror, every moment expecting that he would fall in a fit, crying, "Oh, Sir Thomas! Sir Thomas! speak, for God's sake, speak!" Charles stood pale as a ghost,

and trembling violently; and Georgina clung to her father, and burst into a passion of tears.

But at once the demoniac spasm of dumb rage gave way. Sir Thomas, as we may just now with his family call him, pushed back the ladies fiercely, and, addressing Charles in a terrible voice, exclaimed, "The devil here! the devil of devils! And you have been with him?—you, my son—you—have been with him? Been under his roof? eaten his bread? accepted his company? put yourself under obligations to him? Death and confusion! My own flesh and blood, my own son, thus to turn traitor to me! And, after this, can you thus show your face before me? Speak, villain, speak! how dare you? how——"

His voice failed him; his lips quivered; his whole frame trembled; his face was livid, and almost black with anger. At once he dashed down the paper which he held in his hand, stamped on it with his foot, and went like a tempest from the room.

Charles picked up the important though unlucky paper, and sate with a feeling of inexpressible horror upon him. His mother, aunt, sister, all were sunk down on their seats, weeping and sobbing violently. There was a long continuance of this miserable scene, when Charles ventured to say, "What have I done

to deserve all this? I was driven by a terrible storm and night to this man's house. He would not let me go; he insisted on accompanying me. He risked his life to effect my object. And I will say it, however you may think of it, that both he and his family have behaved throughout like anything but enemies to us."

"Oh, my dearest Charles!" said all the ladies at once, his sister rushing to him, and embracing him passionately. "What a misfortune! What is to become of us?" And again they gave way to excessive grief. Suddenly, Mrs. Fitzpatrick hastened from the room after her husband; Aunt Judith followed; and Georgina, coming and clasping Charles's arm, and weeping profusely, said, "Oh, dearest Charles, how unfortunate that you fell in with these people! How unfortunate that they have followed us! All is over now; all our quiet happiness here! How inveterate must this man's enmity be to induce him to pursue us across the globe."

"Geordy, I don't believe it!" said Charles. "I don't believe in his enmity. If you had seen what I have, you would not believe it. Do people risk their lives out of enmity?"

"But at all events, then," said Georgina, "what

a pity Papa should know; that this man should have signed that paper."

"But, Geordy, the man, as you call him, being here, Papa must soon know; and if he had not signed the agreement, and it came out, as it would, that I had been there, that would have looked like a concealment, which my father would have resented in me still more. No, no; Martin being here, my father must know: and, though I was startled when I saw he had signed the paper, I immediately felt it was all for the best; and, if Papa would only listen to reason, he would soon see that there is no danger, but good, awaiting us."

"Good!" exclaimed Georgina, "good! oh, Charles! never, never. All this sweet peace, this quiet life, it is all over; we shall have to leave."

"Do n't believe it, Geordy," said Charles, throwing his arm round her; "do n't believe it. I know my father; he will defy the devil, as he calls him, but he is too proud to budge a step."

"Then, what a miserable life for us here, Charley! What a miserable life! All that old misery; those terrible outbreaks of fury, that fear of apoplexy, of the rupture of some fatal vessel, that prostration in which poor dear father used to lie after those frightful paroxysms. Oh! sad, sad: what shall we do?"

"But listen, Geordy," said Charles, and he began to tell her all that had passed. How amiable the Martins appeared; what the boys had said; what Mr. Martin had said on the road of his endeavours for their good. Georgina for some time listened with incredulous ears, shook her head, and shed fresh tears. When, however, Charles had told her all, she said, "Well; at least, it is very strange, very unaccountable. I don't know what to think: I wish I could believe it all true." The unhappy brother and sister sat, with their arms about each other, in the utmost sorrow. Meantime, in his own bedroom, Mr. Fitzpatrick had exhibited all that violence of rage which had made his family so miserable during the years that his trials with Sir Patrick were going on. Oh, those miserable times! how they came back like a black night over the house. It was like the crack of doom bursting again on this fated family which, after years of the most awful unhappiness, had seemed to have escaped far away from all the old wretchedness into a new life of peace, beauty, and hope.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Aunt Judith could only sit and listen to the outburst of the dreadful storm of passion; any attempts on their part to soothe Mr. Fitzpatrick only the more irritated him, and they sat

and trembled and wept, while he cursed his fate and denounced vengeance and death on the villain who dared thus to dog him to the world's end. For hours he marched to and fro across the room, sometimes wrapped in gloomy thought, sometimes striking his forehead and clenching his hands, and with fearful groans again bursting forth in imprecations on his own fortune and on the detested pursuer of his steps. Towards midnight he staggered in his walk, caught at the bed-post, sat down in a sullen lowering mood, and gradually fell into that state of prostration which always followed these paroxysms, and which, perhaps fortunately for him, would sometimes continue for days. His family had always expected that in some one of these outbreaks he would die by apoplexy or rupture of a vessel; and the two ladies saw with a certain degree of satisfaction his subsidence into this state of exhaustion. Aunt Judith then stole quietly out, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick sat down and watched by his side.

When Aunt Judith joined the two young people, she found them still sitting with their arms round each other, silent and miserable. They rose and asked her how their father was. "He is quiet now," said Aunt Judith; "but what an ending to our beautiful new life!"

Charles endeavoured to impress Aunt Judith with the ideas which he had been communicating to his sister, but to all that he urged she only replied by shaking her head, and saying: "It won't do! it won't do! the thing is bad, bad, bad, past redemption. We are now ruined for ever!" When Charles spoke of the amiable appearance of the Martin family, of the straightforward character of the man, Aunt Judith replied: "Yes! there is the mischief of it. If the family had the character of a bad family, if the man had bad habits, the world would see and understand it; but there is the mischief. The family conducts itself admirably, the man is in all but his inextinguishable enmity to my brother, a correct, an honourable, a domestic, and most respectable man. That is his art. That is his tower of strength. It is out of this tower that he can fling his poisoned darts with tenfold effect. If he were confessedly bad, he were at once powerless."

When Charles related what he had accidentally heard from the boys —"Ha! cunning!" said Aunt Judith; "that was meant for you!" When he reminded her of Peter Martin's bold fording of the river to serve him, and his risking his very life— "But," said Aunt Judith, "he told you it was an accident; he did not mean to risk anything! Oh!"

continued she, clasping her hands and looking upwards, "if he had but drowned himself, what a blessing!" Such was the feeling with which a most deplorable family feud could inspire the kind heart of even Aunt Judith. But when Charles told her that Mr. Martin had hinted at dangers that threatened them here, and that he was on the watch to defeat those dangers, Aunt Judith exclaimed: "Oh! the consummate hypocrite! He defend us from dangers! What dangers can there be here except from himself? Charles! Charles! are you so blind, so easily imposed on? Oh! you do not know the craft, the subtlety of this man! He threw out that hint to unsettle us. He had heard that we are happy here, and he has resolved to chase us away, or make us wretched on the spot. Oh, the Judas! Oh, the fiend!"

Charles reflected for a moment. Could these things be so? Were they a part of this man's art? But he speedily cast the suspicion from him. He *felt* that it was not so. He was as sure as of his life, that what he had seen and heard was genuine. "Dearest Aunt," he said, "if you and my father would listen to reason, I am sure you would soon think differently."

"Reason!" said Aunt Judith, vehemently; "reason! there is no reason about Mr. Peter Martin; there

cannot be. Never! never! will your father condescend to speak concerning him. Do n't attempt it, or you may cost him his life."

"Very well, dear Aunt, very well," said Charles; "be it so; we will leave it to time." They all withdrew to bed, miserable and silent.

When Charles entered the breakfast-room the next morning, he found Dr. Woolstan seated at table with Aunt Judith and Georgina. He had been sent for in the night. There was a gloomy expression on the faces of the ladies. They looked very pale and ill. The doctor rose kindly, pressed Charles's hand, and in reply to his inquiry, said his father was now quiet, and getting some good sleep. When, after breakfast, the doctor rose to depart, Charles accompanied him up the hill. He asked him what he knew and thought of the Martins. He replied, that he thought them very excellent people, and Mr. Martin as real and kind-hearted as he was certainly a profoundly informed and clever man.

Charles said he wished that he could make his family believe that. "Yes," said the doctor, "that were a work indeed! That were to remove mountains. I know all that has taken place; but time, my dear young friend, time, that will do it: keep quiet, let the storm blow over, things are working, and will work

without you. Be passive, and above all things do not contest these matters with your father, as you wish to keep him."

Charles saw that the doctor knew all; he felt the full wisdom of his words, he pressed his hand cordially, thanked him, and went home consoled. But not the more was that home restored to peace. Comfort, happiness, had fled. For a week the paroxysms of his father returned with returning strength. He was continually haunted with the idea of being pursued and beset by his unwearied, unappeasable foe. That his life was doomed to be embittered by him to its close, and that no spot of earth, however remote, was secure from his pursuit. Sometimes he worked himself up to a persuasion that it would be justifiable to rid himself of him as he would of a wolf or a serpent. At others he shuddered at the possibility of staining his hands with human and kindred blood. His mind turned and preyed upon itself for want of a proper outlet for its anguish. Now he would flee once more, now he would not move a step for the world; and when he looked out of his window and saw the magnificent scenes around, he groaned in bitter pain at the thought that all this was spoiled for ever, that Satan was in his paradise.

It was a full week before he sent for Charles into

his room. Charles was shocked to see how much he was changed. His face was sunken from its rosy plumpness to a withered yellow; his form was reduced in substance; his hair appeared gray, and hung wild and lank. There was the languor of sickness in his whole appearance; and his eyes, generally so clear and bright, were dull, and the once clear white, yellow and streaked with a fine network of sanguine veins.

As his son approached he clasped him in his arms, and sobbed heavily. He remembered the bitter words he had spoken in his anger, and especially the word "villain," and his noble heart was wrung with remorse. After a time, and still with his arm laid on Charles's neck, he said, "You meant no harm, Demby; but avoid that man — promise me. You don't know him, and I trust never will. Why should we let him break our domestic harmony? No; you will have nothing to do with him."

"I will do whatever you please, papa," said Charles, kissing his father's hand, and the tears starting to his eyes.

"That's right, my boy — I believe you — so no more about it." The father and son walked out together into the sitting-room.

But the brightness of that home could not come back thus. "The glory and the joy" were gone

from Tallangetta. The enemy was in the vicinity: the storm which had burst upon its roof had left deep and lasting traces. Deep were the traces in every heart and on every brow in that lately so happy family; but deepest far on those of its master. The terrible shock which had gone through his whole system left its wounds and its weakness in the entire frame. He still looked ill, and had lost his elasticity. His rides were never far from home, and always in the company of his son, and often of his daughter, or, in their absence, of David Rannock. Mirth and spirit were no longer found in the mood even of the young people. He himself rode sad and silent. Thus time went on: no event took place: the hated personage never appeared upon the scene. Nothing was heard of the Martins or of Bongubine more than if they had been altogether the creations of a dismal dream. The other neighbours came sociably and partook the hospitalities of Tallangetta, and shared in its sports. Captain and Mrs. Ponceford were, from their nearness, constantly riding up, and, from their pleasant and cheerful natures, became regarded with warm affection, and their presence brought certain cheerfulness. The Woolstans, the Metcalfes, the Quarriers, were all most friendly and welcome neighbours. Charles and Captain Ponceford found

abundance of sporting together. Sometimes stalking wild turkeys on the plains; sometimes hunting up the wild ducks and swans on the Monalka and the lake; and sometimes chasing the kangaroo in the hill forests with their noble brace of hounds. The natives came to fish and hunt there, and afforded the Fitzpatricks a new object of study. They watched their modes of securing their game, visited them at their camps, and saw with wonder their wretched mode of life, and received plenty of visits from them in return to beg tea, bread, mutton, and, above all, if they could get it, brandy. But this they steadily refused, giving them, instead of it, blankets for the winter, and now and then a sheep or a piece of beef in exchange for fish, which they caught plentifully.

Charles and Georgina paid a visit to the Quarriers at their station on the Goulburn, and greatly enjoyed the change of scenery. The Quarriers' station was situated on a swelling ground just above the river. On three sides rose the forest, dignified with noble trees so thinly disseminated as to allow of a rich turf beneath them, and giving a park-like appearance. On the other rolled the noble river, deep between its banks; and the opposite side also crowned with fine woods. When we say the river lay deep between its banks, we convey no just idea to an English

reader. The river might be sixty yards or more wide, and its waters looked very deep. The banks were almost perpendicular, cut through a sandstone stratum, and dark with the coating of moist mud from the wintry floods. Just below the Quarriers' house the river made a fine sweep, and then its deep abundant waters flowed on in stately grandeur, making a tempting surface for a boat. But no one could descend those steep slippery banks, of twenty or thirty feet descent, overhung with gigantic trees. It required the aid of art, which had been afforded; steps were cut down to the water's edge, and a boat was there always chained in readiness for crossing or fishing. The fishing here was a great delight to Charles, from the grandeur of the fish, — the cod of the river often running to sixty or seventy pounds weight. Sometimes they ascended the river amongst the most beautiful and solitary hills, and at others descended into the silence of the low lands, where on either hand extended immense swamps, dark with wattles or solemn with the endless, huge, bluish columns of the vast red gum-trees, growing in the lively green of nature's ever verdant water-meadows.

Time had thus passed till July, when Mr. Fitzpatrick, as if to recompense Charles for his momentary severity, told him that as they had now sufficient

shepherds and stockmen, and as there were said to be fresh discoveries at Bendigo, he would give him leave to take Barks and Purdy and make an expedition to the diggings.

This was joyful news for all parties. There was an immediate bustle to get ready. The tent which they brought up with them was hauled out; an awning fitted to a light cart; and new mattresses and blankets, an oilcloth to lay on the ground at night to receive their beds, and the necessary cooking-apparatus, and tea and hams and other provisions, were quickly stowed in. Club was selected to accompany them as companion, and a savage, brindled bulldog, called Fright, to chain under the cart as guard. Charles appeared in a pair of fustian trowsers, plunged into a pair of water-proof jack-boots, a stout cabbage-tree hat with light-blue veil, and a scarlet blouse bound by a belt in which appeared his revolver, and a large knife or dagger in a leathern case. Purdy and Barks bore at their belts each a panikin and a brace of pistols; and they had, moreover, a plentiful supply of rifle, gun, and ammunition. Tools they were to buy on the ground.

Never was there more delight and enthusiasm manifested in starting on any adventure. Charles was all life and activity. He was in a constant

worry lest he had left any of his many indispensable articles: his bullet-moulds; his instruments for cleaning his guns and clearing nipples; his caps and cases. Then Club's chain had nearly been left; and his own tobacco-case. At length all was ready, and the cart and brown cob were put into motion from the door, all the family being assembled, and all the families down at the huts being out watching, and ready to wave handkerchiefs and hats, and send up an hurrah. Never since the direful advent of Peter Martin had so many smiles and jokes appeared on the faces and in the mouths of the Tallangetta family; one prophesying heaps of nuggets and insisting on having the largest, and another auguring a speedy return and "glad to be back."

So away went the cart, and our embryo diggers, a dozen voices crying "good bye! good bye!" a loud hurrah mingled with the shrill voices of children coming up from the huts below, Club barking in delight, and Fright trudging on under the cart in sober wonder. In a very short time, the little party had ascended the hill, given a parting cheer before going over the ridge, which was returned vigorously from the huts, and they disappeared.

CHAP. X.

DIGGING ADVENTURES.

Our digging adventurers went on their way with all the jollity of schoolboys. They had but two easy day's journeys before them to Bendigo, and the feeling of free life in the woods has something in it which puts the most sluggish blood in motion, and awakes the imagination to exercise all its enchantments. Barks stalked along with great strides, his long brown hair playing freely on his shoulders, and the spirit of rhodomontade, so strong in him, inciting him to continual sallies of fun. He swung his axe in his hand, and inflicted sundry gashes on the boles of the trees which grew on the road-side, in mere wantonness of spirits, leading Club continually to expect that there was an opossum to be cut out. Purdy went along more quietly, but with many a quiet joke, and sly humour twinkling in his eyes.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, they encamped by the Campaspe. The evening was beautiful and

sunny, and Charles had been attracted to the river by the active movements of a number of platypuses. He had managed to shoot two with his pea-rifle, and Club to bring them out; and they were sitting at their tea, admiring the pleasant hollow in which their tent was pitched, near Robertson's station, with the green meadows and sloping woods on the other side of the stream, when a man appeared, approaching their tent. He was a little fellow, dressed in a coarse blue woollen shirt, stuffed into a pair of ribbed cotton velvet trowsers, which again were stuffed into a pair of dirty boots. This was the whole of his dress, except a very shabby straw hat. But the most remarkable feature of the fellow was a bushy, intense black beard, which seemed to usurp the whole of his face, and to leave only sufficient space for a pair of small, keen, black eyes to peer forth. Club snarled and growled outrageously at the man, and Fright grinned his sullen displeasure from beneath the cart.

"Good evening, mates!" said the man; and before the salutation was well returned, he coolly threw away a bucket of water, which Purdy had just fetched from the river for tea, turned the bucket bottom upwards, and seated himself upon it, in wonderfully close contact to the fire.

"Well, that's cool, mate, anyhow," said Purdy, who was lying on the ground near the fire.

"What! the water, do you mean?" said the man, proceeding, as he sat, to pick up and fling upon the flame sundry little bits of stick, which had been burnt off from the mass.

"The water!" said Purdy, eying the fellow curiously; "no, something cooler than it. Do you know, mate, I'd just had the trouble of fetching it from the river?"

"Trouble! do you call that trouble? You don't know what trouble is, I see. A new life, this, for you, gents," looking at Charles and Barks.

"Not very new, after California," said Barks, in his strong, jolly sort of voice.

"Pshaw! California!" said the man, picking his teeth with a twig; "you never were there."

"How do you know?" asked Barks.

"By the cut of your jib," said the black-looking fellow dryly.

"Or the cut of our bibs," said Purdy. "You think we are new rigged, eh? Many an old vessel is that."

"Well, old man, you're right enough there," continued the fellow; "and so you are for the new rush at the Back Creek, I reckon. A good tent," said

he, looking hard at it, "and a pretty sort of cob there," letting his eye ramble round till it fell on the horse grazing in hobbles near. "Take care of him at Bendigo; there are clever fellows in want of such there."

"Your sharp fellows will find sharp practice with us, if they attempt to make too free," said Purdy; "lead 's heavy, but flies fast out of a good minié."

"Um! well stocked with fire-arms, eh?" said the fellow, peering carelessly into the tent. "But the bird is often flown before the gunner is ready. You 've not done much, young master, in California," said he, pointing to Charles's hands. "Plenty of room for a good crop of blisters on that tender skin, before you get down to the gold."

"There are no thieves about here, are there, do you think?" said Purdy, rather jeeringly.

The fellow pointed to the station just below. "Too near that, mate; besides, the government strings the knights of the highway up too unceremoniously now-a-days."

"It 's no catch me, no have me, though," said Purdy; "there are a few of your honest thieves about yet, I fancy."

"Maybe," said the man, lighting his short pipe with an ember from the fire, rising, turning his back

on the blaze for a moment, and then saying, "Good night, men," walked off. As the eyes of the travellers followed him, they caught sight of a fire at a little distance up the valley, towards which the swarthy fellow directed his steps.

"By the mass! an arrant thief that!" said Purdy, jumping up. "I could swear it was the Black Douglas, by all I've heard of him; and little as he looks, he is the devil for cunning and daring. Neither lock nor wall can hold him. These half dozen times the government has had him in quod, and condemned him to the gallows, but he is always away when wanted, and does some fresh horror that makes the hair of the whole colony stand on end. By dogsmeat! we must keep a sharp look out to-night."

"What!" said Charles, "a mean-looking fellow like that, the notorious Black Douglas."

"Just so," said Purdy, "we'll have the horse tethered near the tent to-night, however, and then I think we may trust to Fright and Club for warning. Better still, let us keep watch by turns."

Purdy's advice was deemed good, and so soon as the black-bearded stranger had disappeared, he and Barks took a stroll through the bush to get a sight of the party camping so near them, while Charles stayed to skin his platypuses. When they returned,

they reported that there were half a dozen as sturdy, scoundrel-looking rogues, drinking brandy, round a great fire, as they ever set eyes on. They had no tent or cart, but every man a good horse, hobbled out near them. There could be no question what profession the fellows belonged to. Our party felt considerable anxiety. They resolved to sit up all together for the night; and made up such a blaze, as at once drove off the night cold, and enabled them to see their horse clearly. As the evening advanced, they caught sounds of riot, singing, and, as it seemed, quarrelling from their neighbours; but by midnight all was still, and Purdy, who stole round and took a survey of them as near as he dared go, for fear of alarming their dogs, reported that they were all sleeping round the fire. This quieted their apprehensions, and Charles and Barks flung themselves down in their blankets, to be called in their turns to watch. When Barks was called, he said, "Where is the horse?" "There, lying down," said Purdy, pointing. "All right," replied Barks; and wrapping himself in his blanket, seated himself on a log, and began to hum a tune. He called Purdy again, instead of Charles, wishing to spare him. At day-break, or near it, Charles woke up, and going out, said to Purdy on the watch, "All right?" "All

right," replied Purdy; "we have escaped the rogues for once." "Then I will give the cob some oats," said Charles. He took some in a tin dish, and went to the horse, but in a moment he shouted, "Purdy! Barks! here! here this instant!" The two men ran in alarm, and found Charles standing in astonishment, gazing, not at the cob, but a miserable creature of a horse, blind, lame, covered with sores, and in the last stage of its misery. The clever rogues had contrived, unheard, unseen, to substitute this ghost of a horse for their prime one.

The astonishment and consternation may be supposed. "What could we be about?" exclaimed Barks. "What could these scoundrel dogs be about?" "Nay," said Purdy, "don't throw the blame on the dogs; the poor beasts trusted to us. If we had left the watching to them, they would have done it." And with that, followed by Charles and Barks, he ran off at full speed towards the camping place of the thieves. The fire was still burning—the fellows were gone.

The three adventurers were beside themselves with indignation. They returned, and traced the horse by its well-known shoe-marks to the high-road, and thence to the thieves' fire, where the cob had clearly gone off with the rest of the horses towards

Bendigo. What was to be done? "I know," said Charles; "I will ask Robertson to lend us a couple of horses to pursue them." Said and done. Robertson knew the name of Mr. Fitzpatrick. He had two horses caught at once. They mounted, and away. Still along the road they could follow the troop of horsemen by the traces of their steeds. They seemed to make no attempt at concealment. Soon our pursuers overtook some drays loaded with hay. They inquired of the drivers if they had seen the thieves.

"To be sure, mates," said they, "large as life; and a regular rakehelly set they are; gallows-birds all. You may soon catch them; they are in no hurry; but take care, or they may treat you to a few ounces of lead in no time. The Black Douglas is among 'em, or we 've no eyes."

Away went Charles and Barks. They rode at full speed, but kept a sharp look out a-head. For several miles they dashed on, now through fine grassy lands, now through barren, hard, stony woods. At length they saw the troop very leisurely trotting along the way. At the sight, our friends cautiously cut into the bush, and rode through the woods at some little distance from the track, that the thieves might not look back and see them. Thus they went on till noon, when the thieves turned aside, and took a

course through the woods, to the left, for three or four miles. Here they dismounted, and made their fire, and hobbled out their horses. Charles and Barks dismounted too, and hobbled out their horses, but made no fire. All afternoon they kept upon the watch. Barks, who knew the country, having come out here to the diggings with hay, said they were on the Sheepwash, not more than three miles from Bendigo, and within a mile of a district pound. What a triumph if they could drive off the rascals' horses, and impound them. Charles shook his head at the idea—a most dangerous attempt!—but Barks gloried in it, and vowed he would essay it. All day, therefore, they lay close. The robbers, secure in their own estimation, sent off to the nearest part of the Back Creek for brandy, and set to for a regular carouse. By the time that evening arrived, they were all dead drunk on the ground. Barks, who had his eyes upon them as a cat watching mice, then rose, sprang upon his horse, followed by Charles; and moving stealthily through the wood, was soon where the horses fed. In a few seconds he had their hobbles all off, including those of their own cob, and gently drove them before him. Not a dog barked—not a man awoke. Barks laughed quietly to himself, and looked full of merriment at Charles, but without

making any noise, and still driving the horses on. Soon he put them into a quick trot, and then a gallop, and away they went till they reached the pound-keeper's.

"Hillo there!" shouted Barks. Out came the pound-keeper. "A few stray horses for you, mate," said Barks; "all but that cob; that is ours."

The man stood and gazed. "By the blazes!" he exclaimed, "why, every one of these is a stolen horse. Where did you find them?" They told him. "The zounds! why that is the Black Douglas! We must have him. Thank you, my good fellows."

He drove the horses into the pound. There was a reward of ten pounds for the finding of each of them advertised — that he kept to himself. There was a reward of 200*l.* for the apprehension of the Black Douglas — of that he was prudently silent. Away he rode for the police, and back cantered our friends, highly satisfied with their success. Whether the pound-keeper secured the Black Douglas we may naturally doubt; for as Charles, a week or two after, appeared at a store in the diggings upon the cob, this very fellow was there at the time, and gave an odd look at the horse, but said nothing, and walked away.

Our party reached the diggings in safety; planted their tent down in the Back Creek, in a pleasant green

valley, near a village of Chinese, and fell to work amongst the bustling, miscellaneous throng who were delving away, amidst dirt and mud and noise, in a scene of the rudest disorder. Charles soon had all the blisters that Black Douglas promised him, and in the first hole they sunk, they had a fine haul of gold! The second was a failure, and the third. The rush on the Back Creek was dying away, and they gave themselves a day to stroll through the diggings and look out for some richer spot. They closed their tent, and left it to the care of Providence, as hundreds of others did. Their cob they had sent to a station, and now they rambled through many miles of diggings, all scattered with tents, felled trees, butchers' shops, and sheep's heads; cast-off clothes, sardine-tins, and goats. Towards evening they found themselves at what are called the White Hills, near the Bendigo Creek, the waters of which were thick as paste, and yellow as gold itself with the washing out of thousands of tons of gold-containing clay and gravel. They here turned into a large tent, dignified with the name of "Crystal Palace," though it was simply of dirty canvass. Within were a number of rude tables at which sat rows of diggers in their gravel-stained shirts and trowsers, drinking and smoking. Some were singing, some loud in talk, a dozen at a time;

and towards the farther end sat a slender, tawdry-looking young woman, strumming away on a most dissonant piano, but singing to it a song which strongly excited Charles's attention, called Mary Massey.

MARY MASSEY;

THE SQUATTER'S SONG.

Stream forth, ye white flocks, in the morning;
  Ye are ten thousand and more;
And ye range from the banks of the Murray
  To the hills of Durradaghnore.

When I was a boy in Old England,
  A boy very young and small,—
I lived on the farm of Squire Massey,
  Below Squire Massey's old hall.

And oh! what a man did I think him!
  A man with that ample estate;
With his hounds and the old yellow carriage,—
  No mortal was ever so great.

I thought so: but now old Squire Massey
  Is dead, and to utter decay
Has fallen his fortune, and Mary,
  His daughter, is gone quite away.

She is gone to the rising Australia,
  To the land of white flocks and of gold;
For the boy from the farm of Squire Massey
  Remembered her goodness of old.

And the boy from the farm of Squire Massey
  Is the squatter of Durradaghnore,—
With his plains, his woods, and his mountains,
  And flocks of ten thousand and more.

And the lady of Durradaghnore,
  Mary Massey, the last of her line,
Has her hall and her new yellow carriage,
  In a land and a climate divine,

Where the flocks o'er the plains in the morning
  Stream onward, ten thousand and more;
And range from the banks of the Murray
  To the hills of Durradaghnore.

And often she thinks of Squire Massey,
  Of the stately old hall of her race;—
She sighs; but she smiles as she glances
  Around on this summer-bright place,

Where the flocks o'er the plains in the morning
  Stream onward, ten thousand and more;
And range from the banks of the Murray
  To the hills of Durradaghnore.

Our friends called for each a nobbler, a good hot mess of steaks and potatoes; and refreshed by their dinner, drew forth their pipes and patriotically blended their smoke with that of their fellow diggers. During this time they were entertained with various other songs, one of which appeared particularly popular.

THE DIGGER'S SONG OF THE BUSHRANGER.

They'll hang him, if they catch him,
  Like a dog in a string;
And I see the blue boys watch him —
  They mean him to swing.

For it's hard on the digger,
  Who goes pick-a-pick
Through the hard quartz and gravel,
  To be played such a trick;

While the sun melts his marrow,
  As he grubs for the gold,
To find when he's got it
  That he's regularly sold:

With his pile in his pocket,
  Setting out on his tramp
To his ship down at Melbourne,—
  Bailed up by this scamp.

They'll hang him, if they catch him,
  Like a dog in a string;
And I see the blue boys watch him —
  They mean him to swing.

And sarve him right, the villain!
  There a-lurking with his gun,
With his knife and his revolver,
  And thinking it good fun.

Robin Hood he was good
  'Neath the old forest oak;
But we want here no Robins
  A-robbing honest folk.

Why, it's not very pleasant,
In the dark whipstick bush,
To be shot down like a pheasant,
Or pulled up like a rush.

Oh! they'll hang him, if they catch him,
Like a dog in a string;
And I see the blue boys watch him—
They mean him to swing.

And let him swing, the villain!
Where the diggers all march by;
Like Black Douglas and smooth Melville,
Let him hang high and dry.

Yes, they'll hang him, if they catch him,
Like a dog in a string;
And I see the blue boys watch him—
They mean him to swing.

Presently two men came in, looked round, and then seated themselves at the adjoining table. The one was a big, tall, burly fellow, with a curly black head of hair, a full pudding-featured face, but red with good eating and drinking. He wore a black ordinary hat, looking very odd with its tall square crown amid that generation of wide-awakes, and shallow-crowned cabbage-trees; a pair of close black breeches, jack-boots, and a check shirt. His companion was a meek-looking fellow, not particular in costume, but with a smiling, sociable, scrape-acquaint-

ance sort of face. The two called for their nobblers, lit their short pipes with lucifer matches that with their brimstone almost took the breath of our friends; and then the big man in the black hat and breeches fell into discourse with them. He made very free inquiries as to the time of their arrival, their luck, the best quarter of the field now for gold, but was equally communicative of his own experience. At every fresh piece of information he appealed to his companion, who certified all his intelligence with a very placid smile, and "Oh yes! you know, mate; you know."

When our friends said they had not yet been so successful as they expected, he observed that he could not complain; in fact, he had been singularly lucky. He had now, he said, a heap of washing-stuff containing several cart-loads, lying by the creek, ready for washing out. There was three hundred pounds' worth of gold in it if there were a penny. "Is n't it so, mate?" said he to the meek, smiling man. "To be sure, mate; why ask me, you know, mate; you know."

"Now," said the big man, "I should think it might answer your purpose to wash out that pile. I'd make you a good bargain. I'm not fond of working in the water, unless there 's brandy in it," said he, smiling,

and lifting his glass, with a nod to our party. "I 'd sell it, at least, I would not mind doing it, though you know, Joe, I 've never offered it to any one yet."

"Of course not," said the meek man, "or you 'd have been pulled all to pieces for it; of course you know that, Ben, you know it well enough."

"Three hundred pounds' worth and sell it for one," said Purdy; "that 's all my eye."

"You can try it, mate, you can try it," said the big man; "only let me say the word, and it 's gone to a hundred customers; but no compulsion; you can try it if you like."

"Let us try it, then," said our party, and out went they all together. The big man in the black hat and black breeches, and his meek companion, smiling kindly on all, led the way down to the creek. There stood a very small tent, amongst a number of others, and close to it, and to the creek, lay the heap of washing-stuff, enclosed by a sort of rude fence of boughs.

"What," said Charles, "do you leave stuff of that value here, unprotected?"

"It is protected, mate, said the big man; "we can see it from the Crystal Palace; no fear."

"No, no fear; trust you, Ben, for that," said the smiling, placid man.

"You could wash it out here," said the big man, pointing to a little dam and sluice in the creek; "that Tom's mine,—you could use it. So now try it, try it anywhere. Here are a spade and a dish."

Charles, who was become expert at the dish, took it, and Barks struck the shovel into the heap, and filled the dish. Charles washed out. There was gold, and plenty too.

"Did not I say?" said the big man: "but try it again,—try it anywhere."

"To be sure," said the meek man; "try it, try it, no treachery in Ben. All serene."

They tried the heap; here and there, it was all alike: very clear that at that rate there must be at least three hundred pounds' worth in the heap. The bargain was struck, the money paid, and they hurried away to fetch their tent to the spot. They hired a horse to draw their cart the few miles for a pound, and by the break of day they were on the spot. There was no room for their tent amid the chaotic heaps of clay and gravel all around, though the very little tent was struck and gone. They crossed the creek, set up their tent on a green flat, and came with shovels and dishes to commence washing out. They turned the water of the dam

into the Long Tom, or washing trough, and began washing in good earnest.

"Hillo there, mates, how's that?" said a tall, strong young fellow, coming up. "How's what?" asked Charles, pausing as he was shovelling in the washing-stuff.

"Why, that's my dam, that's all," said the young man.

"Your dam! the men that we bought this heap of said it was theirs."

The young man gave a very significant smile. "You've bought this heap?" "Yes." "Given much for it?" "A good sum. It is very rich stuff."

"Is it?" said the young man. "You've tried it?" "Yes, we've tried it." "Try it again, dig deep. There, give me the shovel." He struck the shovel deep into the stuff, threw out what was on it, and then plunged it still deeper. "There, try that."

Charles washed and looked, washed and looked more anxiously,—there was not a glimpse of gold. A strange conviction began to flash over him that they were duped. By this time a regular crowd of diggers had gathered round, inquiring "what was up." "Only Blessed Ben and Holy Joe again," said

the young man. "They have dipped into these new ones here; sold them this plated heap for solid washing-stuff, that's all!"

"The devil they have," resounded on all sides. There was a wonderful noise and talk and laughter. Scores of great, rude, digger fellows, came and stared and grinned enormously at the confounded trio. "Lord!" said they, "how greenhorns do abound! That Blessed Ben and Holy Joe should play that old game over so often, and yet find fresh innocents."

"Blessed Ben and Holy Joe!" exclaimed a man who looked like a store-keeper; "where are they?"

"Ay, you may ask that, mate," said another; "of course they 'll make themselves scarce for a bit."

"Scarce or not," said the man, "I 'll have 'em. They 've stole a horse of mine, worth eighty guineas, and here 's a warrant to seize them. Come along, mates," said he, earnestly, to Charles and his companions, "let us hunt them till we have them; I 'll spend a thousand pounds to hang them, the canting scoundrels."

Charles and Barks went off with him, leaving Purdy to guard what gold there was in the heap. They applied at the police magistrate's for a warrant, got it, and commenced their search. For a whole

week, they traversed the diggings, gully after gully, one long mile of tents, one long wooded valley after another. Grog-shops, gambling-shops, billiard-tents, shampooing, and other sham resorts, but in vain; they could catch no glimpse of the blessed and holy brethren. This time, they began to fancy they had transferred their practice to some other field. It was on Sunday morning, as our party were in their beds, taking a needful rest after the week's fatigue, that the indefatigable store-keeper roused them, saying, he had got a new idea. "The fellows pretend to be pious; let us to-day have a peep into the chapels."

The disturbed party did not think the idea a very bright one: it was not likely, they thought, that they would show themselves in such public places. "It is not the public ones that I reckon on," said the man, "but the outsiders, what we may call the odd hole and corner saints, that cultivate queer faiths in queer places. There are plenty of them, and they seem of the sort of these fellows."

"I 'm your man," said Purdy, jumping up, and dressing quickly. He had soon breakfasted, and they set out. They left the episcopal church, and the Scotch church, and the Free Kirk, and what they called the tip-top dissenters' chapels, and bore away

into obscure quarters, where religions, too numerous to name, flourished in greater or less degrees of eccentricity. But alas! the result was the same: amid all the strange and uncouth assemblies of the gullies and the flats, no Blessed Ben or Holy Joe became visible. It was as they were on their return, wearied and dispirited, in the evening, that they caught the sound of a man's voice, as if preaching, in a large, dingy-looking tent. They looked in. It was the chapel of the Mormons, or Latter-day Saints.

The scene which presented itself was worth studying. The place was lit by candles tied on the top of long sticks stuck into the ground. The company was seated on rude planks raised on logs. A more hairy and bearded set of fellows than was there assembled you would look for in vain. They were all in their work-day dress, mere trowsers and shirts, or woollen blouses, for the most part soiled with stains that would not wash out. There was evidently no lack of Californians, of those long, lean, gaunt fellows who have ranged the wilds of America, always too much go-a-head to gather flesh. There were abundance of women, for the most part very neatly clad, and modest and serious looking. On the faces of the men there was an air of sanguine fanaticism,

a glare of the eager, impatient, sensual eye, that gave unmistakeable evidence that the only principle in them was self, the only faith was the belief in the greatest possible license. Mingled with these pilgrims of the Sandy Desert and patriarchs of the Salt Lake were heavy, dense English labourers, porters, and navvies, who had never seen the inside of a school, and few of them of a church or a chapel, gross, ignorant, and brutish. These listened with swinish eyes and watering mouths to the new gospel of the place, the gospel of goats and satyrs.

A cart-body turned bottom upwards at the farther end of the tent served for pulpit, or rather rostrum, and on this was mounted a small, erect, formal man, with a portentous brown beard reaching to his breast, and spreading wide about his ears, and a head of brown hair which hung in a wonderful luxuriance of curl. He was a slim, black-faced sort of fellow, with black twinkling eyes, which seemed set with a small, eager stare as if he were always on the very point of piercing into some wonderful mystery; and he was holding forth in a strain which indicated that he was already far gone in his sermon or harangue.

But what instantly caught the eye of Purdy and the storekeeper were Blessed Ben and Holy Joe seated to the left hand of the preacher; Holy Joe

with his saintly smile raised most placidly and unctuously towards the preacher, as if taking in whole measures of sacred felicity and instruction. Blessed Ben, with a more careful eye to the dangers of this howling wilderness of earth, sate facing the door, and evidently caught the very first glimpse of Purdy's head. The storekeeper, however, did not show himself, but, with a hint from his companion, dextrously withdrew from the door and posted off for a bevy of police. Meantime Purdy, watching his prey, also listened to the preacher, the current fragment of whose discourse was in this manner: —

"Well, my brethring, I have shown you that the days are coming, the latter days, in which the saints are to inherit the earth. There have been three dispensations: first, that of Moses, the dispensation of circumcision and rejection of swine's flesh. That is done with; we reject the circumcision, and enjoy the gammon. Then came the New Testament, with its ordinances and subjection to the higher powers. We have walked out of all that, thanks to the beatified Joseph and the golden tablets buried of angels. No longer do we twaddle of restraint and dry morals and obedience; ours is the glorious liberty of the children of God. The world is ours and all that is therein — ours to enjoy at will and without condemnation.

'Others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.' The degenerate, out-of-date, second revelationists, — they of the New Testament, but not of the newest, not that of the great apostle of Nauvoo, — conquer countries, and we enter and enjoy. Yes, my brethren, the standard is raised, the hosts are on the march. By the great Salt Lake rises the New Jerusalem, and from it we are come forth to conquer all the earth. Yes, in this land of gold, we are growing, spreading like the morning, conquering like the noon. 'Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?' Even I, Orson Excelsior Kid, the Apostle of the Diggings, the Prince of the Gold of Ophir. I tread the wine-press alone; but soon you shall all tread it with me, and drink of the new wine of the kingdom of the enfranchised saints. Where now is condemnation — where now is law — where now is sin? All gone; all swallowed up in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The prophecies are fulfilled — 'And in that day seven women shall take hold on one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.' Isaiah, fourth chapter, first verse. This is the day, my brethring; seven women did, I say, nay, ten times seven have seized the glorified

skirts of our brother Brigham Young, and they ride after him in chariots and omnibuses. Bless the Lord for his mercies! Arise, therefore, ye favoured ones; take and eat, and drink, and grow great in the faith. All things are lawful for you. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' — eighth chapter of Romans, thirty-third verse. All, I say — yes, I, the great Orson Excelsior Kid, I say it — all is ours, the earth and the fullness thereof; and we are called, as the children of Israel of old, to plunder the Egyptians. For what says the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that is, of the second revelation — 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.' Corinthians, chapter ten, verse twenty-four.

"Well then, my friends, with this glorious charter of perfect freedom, open your eyes, clear them from every film of the old law, take the beam out of thine own eye, as the blessed Scripture of the blessed Joe Smith saith, and put it into thy brother's eye: and fear no longer to use freedom of speech; lying is no longer lying, it is exploded, grown antiquated, gone out like the snuff of a candle. 'For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; yet why am I also judged as a sinner?' — third of Romans, seventh verse. Arise, therefore, my beloved brethring, and shine. Yea, shine; dazzling

the weak optics and timid minds of the outward ones, and ye shall quickly take, conquer, possess, and territorise over these vast lands of gold, and wool, and oil, and corn, and wine. Here I see in the holy visions of the elect that every man shall soon literally sit under his own vine and his own fig ——"

At this instant, when the whole assembly was wrought into a state of intensest excitement, a veritable holy agony; when Brother Orson Excelsior Kid's visions of conquest and glory were spreading marvellously over every brain; when Blessed Ben exclaimed, "Beautiful! beautiful as a dream!" and Holy Joe smiled seraphically, and echoed, "Beautiful indeed!" when a lean, dry Yankee, cried aloud, "Well, I calclate that 's kinder exilyorating;" and a little Frenchman broke out, "Mon Dieu! très grand, magnifique, pretty vell!"—just then, in that sublime moment, an unexpected miracle took place. That grand head of hair of Brother Orson Excelsior Kid's rose into the air, a flowing wig on a long stick, which was thrust through a hole in the tent behind, and a strange noise of "caw-waw-waw!" followed by a roar of boyish laughter, filled the whole assembly of Latter-day Saints with amazement. In the next moment the wig dropped into the flame of a candle, and blazed up portentously, and the great Orson Excelsior Kid

stood with his bare poll and bushy beard a spectacle unto men and angels.

There was a sudden rush of the indignant brethren to seize the audacious perpetrators of this prank; but Purdy kept strict watch over Blessed Ben and Holy Joe, who were soon in the hands of a strong body of police.

CHAP. XI.

A SAMPLE, NOT OF GOLD, BUT OF GOLD COMMISSIONERS.

HAD the body of police who captured the two Mormon saints, the Blessed Ben and Holy Joe, not been numerous and strong, there might have been mischief, for many a hand was laid on long knife and revolver, and many a great, grim, bearded fellow, only wanted a word from the great Orson Excelsior Kid to plunge the steel and fire the ball with all saintly freedom into the heads of the Philistines — in ordinary phrase, police. But though the great Orson had cried out enthusiastically in one part of his oration, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened;" which he interpreted to mean, "Yea, if necessary, knock in a door or an unbeliever's skull;" yet, out of the pulpit, or rather the cart-body, Orson Excelsior had the prudence or the weakness of mortal flesh; therefore, when the sanguinary brethren looked to him for a sign, there was no sign given, but that of the poor little man hurrying away

with a huge white hat dropped over his naked head, even to his shoulders.

The two culprits were secured in the lock-up for the night; and as it was well known that such men often miraculously had disappeared out of it when wanted, strong though it seemed, the storekeeper's friends set a watch over it. The next day, at eleven o'clock, they were brought out before two commissioners and magistrates, Messrs. Light and Shadow.

Now let no one deceive himself by his knowledge of what magistrates are in England or anywhere else. Let nobody imagine a couple of portly, sage, rubicund old gentlemen, with very white hair and cunning faces, sitting in the seat of judgment on this occasion. The great country of colonies and colónisation, of vast dependencies and vast interests, old Mother England, to very young countries sends, in her wisdom, very young magistrates. These youths, unlearned in the law, — for they never knew till the happy appointment came, whether their friends, through a certain member of parliament, had got them a clerkship, or a bishopric, or a magistracy,— were, however, ready for anything, and, therefore, by government logic, qualified for anything. These two verdant justices of peace, and commissioners in charge of Her Britannic Majesty's gold-fields, were

downy-chinned lads of a tall growth. They were clad in a military costume of blue cloth, well covered with gold lace, and cloth caps with a broad gold band. Mr. Commissioner Light was a young man of handsome figure, and with a smooth pretty face, and a bust worthy of a hairdresser's window, even though it boasted plate glass. Mr. Commissioner Shadow was also a tall, fair youth, with very light hair and very quick motion, and a confident, boyish, empty air. He was in everything the echo and *fidus Achates* of Light.

Placed before this illustrious pair of representatives of the majesty and the laws of England, they surveyed Blessed Ben and Holy Joe with eyes which seemed to have seen them before, and asked what was the charge. Charles was the spokesman; and having been sworn, related the story of the *plated* heap of washing-stuff. Before he had concluded, Light and Shadow had gradually kindled up from an assumed gravity into a smile, which culminated in a downright burst of loud laughter. "Do you hear that, Shadow?" asked Light, in a delicate voice. "What a sell!—the old dodge, and still gudgeons."

"Green! green! uncommon green!" exclaimed Shadow, stamping about and rubbing his hands.

"My young fellow," said Light, in great dignity, "do you come here for us to furnish you with brains?"

"Deucedly taken in, if they do!" said some one behind the crowd.

"Who's that? Who said that?" exclaimed Shadow, turning round savagely. Of course nobody knew.

"Why did you not try the washing-stuff?" asked Light.

"So we did, but not deep enough," said Charles.

"No, certainly not deep enough by any means," replied Light, again laughing at his own wit. "Well, fellow," said he, addressing Blessed Ben, who stood very humbly, and bowed low his bushy black head at every word of the magistrate's; "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Go it, Blessed Ben, you know how to convince them," said the same voice behind.

"Who is that?" cried both the magisterial lads. "Bring them forward. We'll commit them for contempt of court." But here again the wisdom of Mrs. Glass became apparent, "First catch your hare, and then—." The police made active search, it was "Vox et præterea nihil."

The insulted majesty of the English colonial bench

again sat down. "What have you to say for yourselves, you there?"

"Oh! Lord bless your honours," said Blessed Ben, smiling quite graciously upon the bench. "What can we say? what need we say? *We* impose on anybody indeed! It's all fair, see here," presenting a paper. "That is from Mr. Geld Krieger, the German gold-buyer; he wanted to buy the heap, and examined it, and here is his certificate."

Ben handed the paper to Light with a most gracious air, and Holy Joe smiled most serenely, saying, "The idea! we trick even the babe unborn!" Mr. Commissioner Light scanned the paper a moment, and exclaimed, "Oh! most satisfactory! most entirely satisfactory. I dismiss the charge,—a most ridiculous and childish charge indeed."

But what was Charles's astonishment to see, for he happened to stand just then a little in the rear of the honest Commissioner, that within the paper was simply spread a ten pound note! Mr. Justice Light coolly folded the paper, and put it in his pocket, and Charles stood rooted to the spot in dumb surprise.

The blessed brethren were comfortably moving off towards the door, when the storekeeper said, "Stop a bit; it is my turn now."

"What do *you* say, sirrah?" asked Light, sharply.

"I am no sirrah," said the storekeeper, reddening, "but a plain, substantial tradesman, who can have law for his money. Those fellows stole my horse, and there is my warrant." Light took the warrant, just turned it over in his hand, and looking over his shoulder to Shadow, said, "I think we must defer this hearing till to-morrow. I feel greatly fatigued."

"And so do I, damnably," said Shadow; "these tedious, silly affairs are confounded bores, and luncheon has been waiting this hour. The kangaroo steamer will be regularly devilled."

So away went the two brilliant specimens of the young officials of a young colony, and Blessed Ben and Holy Joe were conducted to the lock-up, where, the next morning, there was no trace of them. Another magical certificate from the all-potent gold-buyer, Mr. Geld Krieger, had no doubt been as efficacious with the turnkey as with the magistrates. Messrs. Light and Shadow either were very irate with the turnkey, or they acted it with all the genius of Charles Kean; but their attention was, fortunately for the public treasury, immediately called to a score of rude diggers in all their dirt, who were ushered into the court with much bustle and officiousness.

They were unlucky devils, who had been caught without their licenses in their breeches-pockets, though every man protested that he had one in his tent, if he might fetch it under guard; but Light simply said, "You are each fined five pounds, or locked up till paid;" and he and the inseparable juvenile, Shadow, marched off, rather refreshed than fatigued by this summary exercise of the laws, if that name can be given to the caprices of two empty boys, set to govern forty thousand people.

Charles Fitzpatrick was so disgusted by what he had seen, that he left the tent, determined to quit the Diggings forthwith. He was passing out, very hot in his feelings, and with a desperate frown on his features, when a knowing-looking digger, with bright, sparkling, and clever eyes, accosted him in a voice which he recognised as the one that had called out in the crowd the day before. "Sold again, mate," said he. "Keep a bright look-out, and have your license constantly about you, or you'll soon be hauled up like these poor fellows. You are now a marked man. And don't stir out of nights after dark, for the holy brethren have long knives, and are good shots, and there are swarms of them. And don't ask me to come into your tent, for it is just as

likely to have half a dozen bullets through it, one of these fine evenings, as that bribes are pleasant in the palm here."

"Thank you, sincerely," said Charles, as he walked away, full of very strange reflections. But he was not destined to clear the Diggings quite so adroitly as he expected. He had arranged with Barks and Purdy, who wished to try their luck a little longer, to drive home the horse and cart, and leave them to their chance, when, repassing near the justice-tent, on his way from the post-office, his attention was arrested by a crowd gathered round a young woman who had fainted. He was informed that her husband had been seized in company with the Black Douglas, and a desperate band of bushrangers who had shot a couple of policemen, in the attempt to secure them, and that the whole gang, seven in number, were committed for trial, and were just sent off, guarded by a band of troopers, to Castlemaine. As Charles descended the steep hill from the government camp, greatly excited by the distress of the young woman, who appeared anything but like the wife of a bushranger, he was overtaken by the same shrewd-looking man, who had given him the friendly warnings. "This is a bad case," said he; "I don't believe that poor girl's husband is any more guilty

or connected with these villains than you or I; but, nevertheless, they 'll hang him."

"Who is he, then?" asked Charles; "and what was he doing amongst the bushrangers?"

"The lad," said the digger, "is a young Popkins, Abijah Popkins, he is called, a young storekeeper. They tell me he 's the son of very decent parents, religious, regularly religious people, but perhaps they 've been a little too tight-laced with the lad; and then you know well enough, if a young fellow's principles are only held together by lacing, when the lace breaks, down go the principles. The young fellow has been wild here. I don't believe he has any harm in him, but he 's weak, and he has got into a habit of visiting a sly grog-shop, one of those that government pretends to put down, and which its own police wink at for a consideration. There he has met with bad company, this Black Douglas, and Captain Melville, the two most rascally, unhanged highwaymen in the colony, and just as clever at robbery by cards and dice as by powder and ball. The young fellow has lost his money, lost his character, and would have lost his trade, if it had not been for this poor girl, his wife. They 've only been married these six months, and a better creature, poor thing, never married to trouble. Well, the lad, so far as I

can learn, has had nothing in the world to do with these rascally thieves, but to lose his money to them; did not, poor fool, know who they were even that he gambled with; but the police have long been on the look-out for Douglas and Melville, and though they did not want to turn attention to this grog-shop, which was a profitable concern to them, yet the reward for these rascals was become so great, that they were afraid some one else might just drop upon them, and whip off the prize. So all at once they come down on the tent, out rush the thieves, revolver in hand, shoot down two of the police, and off into the bush. This poor lad runs too, for he knew the place was unlawful, and did not know what they might charge him with, and he 's been taken with them, and, sure as fate, they 'll string him up."

Charles was greatly concerned for the unfortunate youth, and his poor young wife, whose pale, ghastly face still haunted him. When he reached the tent and mentioned the circumstance, Purdy exclaimed, —"Popkins! Abijah Popkins! Goodness, gracious! Why, the lad's no more a bushranger than I'm a grandmother. It's poor old Matthew Popkins' son; one of 'em, that is, for he has two or three. Oh, lors! oh, lors! poor fellow! Why, it will kill the old man and woman as well as the wife, poor young cretur."

"Do you know these Popkinses, then?" asked Charles.

"Do I know them? Do I know daylight when I see it?" exclaimed Purdy. "Why, old Matthew Popkins has travelled with his pot-cart into Derbyshire from Staffordshire these thirty years, to my knowledge, and of late years has had one of these quiet-looking lads with him. They tell me he made money, and's come here to make more. By leddy! but this will cut him down, though! He is a religious, very religious man, is old Matthew — belongs to the New Methodies. Oh, gracious me! the idea of one of his lads being hanged!"

"Where does the old man live?" asked Charles, his sympathy continually augmenting.

"Live! Why, warn't you, Mr. Charles, at Bongubine the other day, and not know where Matthew Popkins lives! He's just taken Lahni Mill, on the Campaspe, from Mr. Martin,—you must have seen it,—one of the beautifullest places in the colony."

Charles well remembered the place,—a perfect paradise of a situation,—and such a blow as this to fall on the inhabitants! If trouble can fall there,—so retired, so quiet, so smiling,—what spot of earth, thought Charles, can escape the bolt of calamity?

"Something must be done," said Charles; "we

must do something. This poor lad and this good family must not be lost and ruined for ever without a struggle. I have no faith in the justice here; we must move all means. Purdy, will you ride off and let the old man know?"

"Ay, that I will," said Purdy, jumping up and throwing on his jacket. "I will run to the station for the cob, and I shall reach the mill to-night." He was gone at once, and Charles again walked hurriedly up to the Popkins's store to inquire after the poor woman. He found that she was in a very sad condition, having fainted time after time, and that on recovering her consciousness her agony of distress was something awful. There was a doctor with her, and several of the neighbouring storekeepers' wives were doing all they could for her. Charles waited till the surgeon had told her that her father-in-law was sent for, and that everything possible would be done to clear her husband, and then walked seriously to his own tent. He seemed to count the hours till the old father Popkins could arrive as if it were his own case. The sight of the young woman's face, and the impression which the administration of justice here had left on him, gave him an interest in the affair such as he had never felt before.

It was yet early in the next afternoon when four

horsemen were seen coming at a great rate up the green valley of the Bendigo near Charles's tent. As they drew near he recognised Purdy and the cob. Along with him was a tall old man in black of an old country cut, who rode as if almost falling forward from fatigue, and his strong features wearing a pallid hue and solemn rigidity as of death. Near him rode a boy of seventeen or so, looking equally woe-begone; —and who is that? The short figure, drab suit, and bold, active features of Mr. Peter Martin.

Mr. Martin and Purdy turned directly towards Charles's hut; and the two other riders went on, without a turn of the head or a word spoken, up the valley.

"My dear Charles," said Mr. Peter Martin, springing from his horse, and leaving it to Purdy, "this is a sad affair. Now, a word: — I have heard all that happened on your return home; I am very sorry for it, but it does not surprise me. Another time for that. Now, there is a life to be saved — two — three — perhaps half a dozen. I don't ask you to disobey your father, and have anything to do with me. But this lad must be saved; and you and I cannot help standing side by side, as we each help, any more than two of these gum-trees. We must help — help all we can — body and soul. You and I are no more

to each other than any two constables who may act in it, or two lawyers who may plead on the two sides — but we must go on, each helping. These lives, and the happiness of a most excellent family, are too far above all other considerations to allow us to think of ourselves."

"Just so," said Charles; "I do not seek you, nor will you seek me, I am sure; but we will go on in the same group, doing all we can."

"Just so, just so!" said Mr. Martin. "And now I must get something to eat. I won't enter your tent, out of regard for your pledge to your father: but let your man bring me something under the tree there,"—pointing to one at a little distance,—"and then I will go forwards. It will be better to let the relatives have their own talk first, too."

The active little man at once strode away to the tree, where, flinging his hat and whip on the ground, he seated himself; and was soon busily discussing some cold beef and a bottle of pale ale, Barks acting as butler. Charles entered his tent and sat down, holding no further intercourse with him till he took his leave. When ready he sprang up, his horse was brought, and telling Barks to inform Charles that he thought he had better follow to the Popkinses, he rode off. Charles soon took the same way on foot;

and, on reaching the store, was ushered into the back apartment of it. The scene which presented itself *on* entering never again faded from his memory.

On a sort of sofa, or rather what is called *in* some parts of England a squab—that is, a wooden couch with a cushion upon it,—lay a young woman, the same that Charles had seen in a swoon in the street. She lay now in a state very similar. "Was she really living?" was the thought which passed over Charles's mind as he saw her. She was very young, a mere girl in appearance, and very fair. Her face was round in its contour, her features delicate and sweet; and around them lay her hair of a beautiful golden brown, giving her a sort of angelic look that seemed out of place in the wife of a storekeeper at the diggings. In circumstances of health and happiness she must have presented a very interesting appearance; but now she lay pale as marble, motionless as the dead. Did she really live? Yes; for a youngish-looking gentleman, a doctor, sat with his hand upon her pale thin wrist, and his face fixed on hers with a serious air. On a stool in the corner, behind the doctor, sat the youth whom Charles had seen riding up the valley with the old man, and the old man was down on his knees by the side of the still, corpse-like girl. Near the foot of the couch

stood Mr. Peter Martin, with a look fixed and solemn, regarding the prostrate form — but a look from which that bold, self-confident air which Charles had hitherto always seen in it, had totally vanished, and left an impression of feeling and sympathy equally remarkable. The old man was in prayer. His tall, dark figure was bowed as it were to the earth with affliction, and his long white locks spread on his broad shoulders like the snows of winter on some hoary, storm-beaten mountain. His strongly-developed features were sallow and rigid with grief; and in his prayer he seemed to wrestle with heaven under a feeling rather of the calamity and disgrace fallen upon his whole family than of sympathy concentrated on the phantom-like form before him —in which the spirit was like some slight tissue of cloud in a still evening sky, waiting only for a breath or motion of the air to bear it away for ever.

"Oh, Lord! let this cup pass from me. Let it pass, oh, thou good and merciful God! Many and long are the days in which thou hast crowned me with mercy and blessing. Thou hast made me to go on and prosper; and, now, wilt thou crush me in the latter end as with a millstone? Let it pass, oh God! let it pass. Can it really be that such terrible things

are in store for me? Oh, God! oh, Lord God! arise, arise, and let the truth appear. Thou canst do it! What is it to thee, oh Lord! who guidest the world and liftest the mountains, what is it to thee to make appear the innocence of this poor, weak, misguided lad? Weak, but not so very wicked; no, I will not believe it. No, he cannot have so forgotten all the godly teachings from his youth upward, all the warnings and the solemn ordainings of thy love. Save him, oh Lord! save him: snatch him as a brand from the burning, and give consolation to his afflicted mother and to this poor, down-smitten lamb. Wilt thou slay the innocent for the erring? Oh, Lord! wilt thou cut down this bruised reed, like the grass before the mower? Oh, no! that beseemeth thee not, oh, Lord! that is not like thee in thy ever-loving kindness. Arise, arise, in thy might, and scatter all delusions; for, if this blow falls, we all fall together, we are no better than dead men."

Here the agonised voice ceased; but the tall, strong frame was still trembling with a convulsive spasm, and you could hear the passionate, heavy breathing, and the cracking of his fingers as he wrung, and, as it were, ground his hands together. In the death-like stillness of the room, the stifled sobs of the youth in the corner, who now sate with his

face between his knees and his hands clasped on the back of his head as if he would crush it with them, were painfully loud; and, as Charles cast a glance at Mr. Martin, he saw his lips quivering with emotion, and large tears rolling rapidly down his cheeks. If ever Charles had believed Mr. Martin a bad man since he had first so lately met with him, that belief fled from this moment. While the thought went, lightning-like, through him, Mr. Martin leaned gently forward and said to the doctor, "How is it, doctor? would not you give her a little more stimulant?"

The doctor shook his head. "Let us try a little longer: if she has had enough to keep her up, that is all I want; she has too many stimulants in herself the moment she returns to consciousness; we must preserve a balance if we can—that is the great matter. But the best of all medicines is hope. Give her all the hope you can; give it, even if you have it not yourselves. Give her that, or all that I can give her is useless. Without hope—and strong hope —she dies."

"Good God!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, "what can we do? Poor thing! poor thing! and such a good, dear, admirable creature, a perfect heroine! ay, better, better, a saint! from all they tell me. We

must save her, doctor. I would spend anything, money or strength, to save her."

"What she wants is hope, comfort, faith that her husband will be saved. She had that; but in the inquiries of the old gentleman here, as to who could prove his clearness of any connection with this desperate gang, they vanished, and she sinks, sinks yet — her pulse fades, fades—give me another spoonful from that bottle." It was done; and the death-like form yet swallowed down the potion with pallid, motionless lips.

"But is there no one who can prove an *alibi?* You *believe* he is innocent; where has he been; with whom of late?"

"He has been absent this month and more," said the doctor. "He was wild, and frequented that Gurwood's grogshop, a notorious haunt of gamblers. His wife persuaded him to go away and leave the concern to her, — yes, she has done too much at it; all the while suffering from her anxiety about him. He comes back, goes again to the very same haunt, and is surprised there in actual play with the notorious Douglas and Melville. He rushes out with them. Each of these incarnate fiends shoots down his man, and escapes. Abijah and two others, too well known to be subordinates of the gang, are taken.

That is the case, and it looks as bad as bad can be," added the doctor, speaking low, as if afraid the apparently unconscious sufferer should hear it.

"That looks bad indeed," said Mr. Martin; "but still you think he's innocent, you say. If so, on what grounds? Where, I ask, and with whom has he been?"

"With a man of the name of Randall, a rough, but not bad-looking man; a very excellent man indeed, this poor girl says. She says he has been with him bringing over a mob of horses from Sydney to Melbourne, and was going away with him to stay on his station some time, to strengthen his good habits."

"But that is your man!" exclaimed Mr. Martin; "that is your very man! we must have him at any price. Where is he? Why is he not sent for?"

"There lies the difficulty," replied the doctor; "nobody here knows the man but Mrs. Popkins, and she has been too much agitated — too completely prostrated, to enable us to get the information."

"Then send at once to Castlemaine; we must get it from the prisoner; not a moment must be lost; there is but a week to the assizes."

The strong, excited voice of the speaker, appeared to have roused the patient from her trance-like state. The doctor raised his finger warningly. "She is

coming to herself; her pulse beats agitatedly; she breathes more strongly; she sighs." He leaned over her. The next moment a heavy, deep sigh escaped from the bosom of the poor girl; she opened her eyes an instant, closed them again, and tears were seen streaming from her closed eyelids.

"That is good," said the doctor; "I am glad to see those tears, my dear Mrs. Popkins, they will do you good. They are the first I have seen since I was called in," he added, addressing himself softly to the spectators. "But, my dear Mrs. Popkins," he continued, again addressing her, "you must not distress yourself — you have no need — here is good news." At this word the poor girl's eyes flashed open eagerly; she started up as if endowed at once with all her wonted strength; and riveting her gaze on the doctor, she exclaimed, "What news! oh, what news! what good news! Is it cleared up? Is he at liberty?"

"Not at liberty yet, dear Mrs. Popkins," said Dr. Roche, for that was the physician's name; "no! that is too much to expect in such a case; law is slow and formal; you know, it must be; but he *will* be liberated, take my word for it," smiling kindly at her.

The word law seemed to strike her like a heavy blow or a sudden cold blast; and when the doctor said "take my word for it," she seemed to collapse,

as it were, before the phrase. A shudder passed through her whole frame; and fixing her clear, blue, but anxious eyes upon him, she said faintly, "Is that all? I thought you said there was good news." Her head sunk upon her bosom, her hands were clasped rigidly together, and she appeared, pale and drooping as a broken lily, to be actually sinking into death.

"But, my dear girl," said Mr. Martin, laying his hand suddenly on her arm, and anticipating the doctor's explanation, "there is good news." "Oh where!—what is it?" again exclaimed the agitated girl, at once moving, and turning her thin, pale face, and clear, intensely eager eyes, upon him. "Oh tell me quick, quick; don't deceive me, for I cannot bear it; a word I feel now would kill me."

"But you must not be killed," said Mr. Martin, "on any account; it is you who must and can save your husband." At every word the poor girl's hope seemed to fade away: if it, after all, depended on herself, all was lost, she thought. But Mr. Martin added, rapidly, "I am a magistrate; I am here to serve you, and I will serve you, cost what it may. Now listen; you say your husband is innocent of any connection with these bushrangers."

"Oh, innocent as I am!" exclaimed the young wife; "innocent as the babe unborn!"

"Enough! then all we have to do is to prove that he was not, and could not have been with these bush-rangers on any of the occasions of crime for which they are in charge. I hear that all that is easy as to any such charge till within the last month. The people hereabout, plenty of them, can prove that."

"Oh, yes! yes! scores can," exclaimed the young woman.

"Very well; all we want is to prove that he could not have been with them during the last month, except on the day they were taken here. Where was he during that month?"

"Oh, with Mr. Randall, with Mr. Randall every day of the time."

"Good, and where is Mr. Randall to be found? once let us have him, and all is secure."

At these words, the poor girl gave a violent start, seized her hair on each temple with convulsed hands, drew her hand agitatedly across her forehead, and appeared lost in extremest terror.

"Gently, my dear girl, gently; why alarm yourself so? Tell us where this Randall is, and we will have him, if it be from the south pole."

"Oh!" exclaimed the poor girl, in the wildest, most piercing accent, "he is gone! gone! gone!

quite away. You will never find him in time." And she shook with agitation, and writhed in agony.

"But we will have him, my good girl," said Mr. Martin, confidently; "we will have him, and if not in time for the day of trial, we will have that put off. I know the governor well; he is not the man to deprive any human creature of the feeblest chance for his life; the trial shall be postponed if necessary, so now, cheer up; let us have the address of Mr. Randall, and we will be after him this moment."

The confidence of these assurances, the air of authority of the speaker, the kind, but positive tone in which he spoke, acted like a charm on the terrified girl. She looked at him with increasing wonder and calmness, her hand involuntarily seized his, her blue eyes became calmer, but full of intensest feeling, a slight flush started into her pale face, and with a faint smile she said, "Oh, sir! what comfort you give me! God bless you for ever and ever! If you save my poor Abijah, you will save us all. What shall we do to thank you?"

"Oh!" said Mr. Martin, "we 'll think of that; but this Mr. Randall, do n't you see how Jonas" (our old friend Jonas of the "Adventures in the Wilds of Australia"), and my friend, Charles Fitzpatrick, are already on tiptoe to ride off for him."

The young woman glanced hastily at Charles, whom she had not noticed, drew instinctively her shawl more closely and orderly about her, and said, "But what a ride they will have! How very, very good of this young gentleman. Mr. Randall is gone to Bullarook, where he lives. It is a hundred and fifty miles off, and the latter part of the journey is a terrible one, as I have heard Mr. Randall describe it. It is through the fearful Mallee scrub, and into a dry, parched desert of sand, where it is next to impossible to procure food or water for the horses, and if the travellers get out of the track, they are very likely to perish."

"What in the world," said Mr. Martin, impatiently, "could induce the man to fix himself in such a spot? But never mind, we'll have him, or I'll go myself. Where is it, then?" pulling out Ham's squatter's map, and hastily unfolding it on his knee.

"It is Bullarook,—the desert of Bullarook,—the last station in the habitable country, and actually in the unsettled wilds itself."

"Good gracious! ay, there it is," said Mr. Martin, putting his finger on a certain number of the map; "there it is, north-east of the Lake Hindmarsh, and all beyond marked, to the very Murray on the borders of Adelaide, 'Impenetrable scrub.' Never

mind! we'll have him out of his desert. But if he were here when Mr. Popkins was taken, why did he go away? Was that like a friend?"

"Oh, sir!" said the poor girl, "Abijah was not taken then. Mr. Randall came here with him, and it was agreed that Abijah should go along with him to Bullarook for some months. Abijah went out, saying he had to pay some little accounts, and Mr. Randall saw him, to his consternation, go into Gurwood's. He said at once, 'I will out with our horses, and go to Gurwood's, and take off your husband at once. I dare say he owes something there, but he must not stay there a moment.' Away he went; but when he got to the tent, he heard that the police had been, that the bushrangers had broke away, after shooting two of them, and Abijah was gone too, nobody knew where. The police attempted to seize Mr. Randall, because they had seen him with Abijah, but he galloped off. He sent a man over from Happy Jack's Hut to learn news of Abijah, and to tell me that he could not stay, or he should be seized too on suspicion, and then could be of no use to Abijah if he were taken, but that he hoped he would escape, and that he had left a horse for him at Fenton's station, and he must come after him: he should ride home and wait for news."

"All right then, so far," said Mr. Martin; "and you believe this Randall an honest fellow?"

"Oh, sir! a good man, a wonderfully good man; he has been more than a brother to Abijah."

"That will do," said Mr. Martin, and he looked round for Charles and Jonas. They were gone out: he followed instantly. In the next apartment, the store in fact, he found Charles hastily putting up tea, sugar, salt, and flour, for the journey. Jonas was gone for the horses. A woman with a child under her arm, which she held like a little bundle while she reached down things for Charles, said, "Shall you bring him off, think you, sir?"

"Shall we?" said Mr. Martin, "of course we shall, make yourself sure of that, mate." He knew this would go to the anxious wife. He then gave Charles the squatter's map, pointed out the stations on their way upon it, where they could refresh and lodge, and told them they must, colonial fashion, take four horses, each one in hand, so as to change them on the journey, and thus make vastly more speed. Very soon he saw them off, Jonas riding one of their own horses and leading the other, Charles on Blue Beard, Mr. Martin's horse, and leading his own cob. Away they went at full canter, meaning

to reach Fenton's station that evening, though the sun was getting low.

As soon as they were off Mr. Martin turned into the tent again, where he found old Matthew Popkins seated by the side of the couch of his daughter-in-law, with a very grave aspect, and their conversation did not seem by any means to have consoled or composed the poor afflicted girl. "A poor weak creature is Abijah," he was saying; "but why did not you let us know, Patty? I would soon have been over and read him a lecture."

"Ah, dear father, lecturing does Abby no good. He hates what he calls preaching, and gets out of the way of it. I hoped to win him to stick to business by kindness and by helping him. One does not like running about telling tales of one's own husband."

"But that won't do, Martha," said old Matthew, sternly; "see what comes of it; what trouble, what disgrace, what spotting of our good name. I have always kept a tight hand on Abijah, and he needs it."

The poor girl looked the picture of misery; her face had resumed the same expression of distress, and was again of the same marble hue as when her friends first arrived. The doctor was gone.

"Come, come, Mr. Popkins," said Mr. Martin, "I can't have you lecturing my young friend for your son's faults. It is quite enough that she has had them to bear with and to suffer from. Lecture him as much as you please when you get at him, but I put a decided veto on any lecturing here. This dear, good girl has been a wonder to the whole diggings. She has come all the way out of England out of an old affection, — there, I like to see you blush, my dear madam, — and she has carried on this business, with the help of a rough lad here, to admiration. Early and late she has been at it, sometimes hunting him, — well, well, ma'am — I won't fall into the sin I was condemning, — she has sought up her husband, and set him right again and again; but, as you say, the lad is weak, — well, now, don't be angry, my dear friend, — I don't mean in intellect — he is clever enough — but in resolution. And I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Popkins, we must have this store sold, and have Abijah and our friend here down to Lahni Mill. The store is very valuable; Mrs. Popkins has kept it so, spite of — well, never mind what; I can't have you frowning at me so, madam, — and it will fetch a good sum."

"Well, there's my other son," said Matthew Popkins.

"What, Jonas!" exclaimed Mr. Martin. "No! take my word for it, he'll never turn storekeeper; he's a lad of the bush, and will thrive there. I can't agree to his coming here."

"No, no!" said the old man; "I mean Abner."

"Oh, ay; just so! just so!—the very thing!" exclaimed Mr. Martin. "Yes, yes; he shall come here; and Abijah and Patty, they shall come to the mill. Well, now, you like that," said the vivacious Mr. Martin, going up to the side of the young woman's couch, and taking her hand. "I see you like that; and really it is a paradise of a place, that mill, and that charming valley. There Abijah will be out of the way of bad company, all except his father," he said, laughing; "and if you go, sir, to lecture him too much, you'll be the very worst company he can have. No, no; encourage him, I say; encourage him: I like encouragement. Plants, animals, everything likes sunshine. I like it; too much frost and chill will kill anything. Yes, I see you think just as I do," said he, tapping the young woman on the shoulder, who was smiling, and had regained a wonderful degree of animation, showing she liked both the talk and the prospect of getting her husband away to Lahni Mill. "I shall be delighted, we shall all be delighted, to have you there," he continued, as

if reading her thoughts, as no doubt he did. "We shall all like you, and will have fine times of it. But now ——" he paused a moment, and a cloud as of apprehension fell on that young and most sensitive countenance; "but now, while these lads are away, we must set about and get up all the evidence we can prior to the last month; and, that done, you must be off, Mrs. Popkins, to Castlemaine, and comfort your husband with your presence. I'll see that you have free access to him. And so, Mr. Popkins, send off for your son Abner, to commence store-keeping — a capital chance for him — as soon as he can get hither."

While Mr. Martin and old Matthew Popkins are doing this, with the aid of Mr. Abijah Popkins's wife, and with that of Barks and Purdy, who are despatched as messengers in every direction, we will follow our two young travellers on their journey.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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TALLANGETTA,

THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

A STORY OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA,"

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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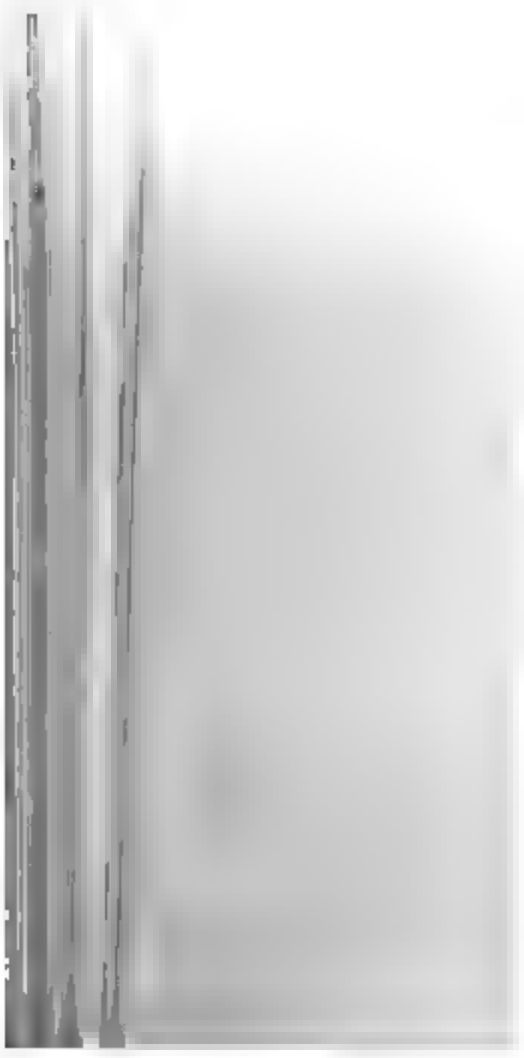

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TALLANGETTA,

OR

THE SQUATTER'S HOME.

CHAPTER XII.

A RIDE IN SEARCH OF EVIDENCE.

Our two youths made the best of their way. Leaving Fenton's station with the dawn next morning, they soon after crossed the Loddon, and held away through the forest towards Mount Korong. Thence they steered their way across the woods to the Avoca, and cantered on, leaving Mount Jeffcott to the left, and bearing north-west for the regions where the waters of the Wimmera lose themselves in the desert lakes. We shall not describe their journey. It was through scenery varied by low hills, rich green valleys, and the different species of gum-trees,

each kind occupying the soil or the rock that it likes best. Now they traversed the low banks of streams where the red-gum flourished in noble bulk and altitude; now the rocky, barren ranges where the stringy-bark and the iron-bark prevailed. They found ready welcome at the different stations on their way, and distinct directions for their next stage. Thus they cantered on, grave and eager to reach their journey's end. Jonas, as we know, a capital bushman, and very amusing in his curiously blundering yet witty observations, was now too deeply anxious to be anything but serious and often taciturn. Now riding one horse and now another, they advanced at a rapid rate; on the second day they found themselves on the borders of that immense region of Mallee scrub which extends over a vast stretch of the north-west of the colony. Luckily for them, a track was cut through it, and they were thus at once enabled to advance with speed, and prevented from wandering. This Mallee scrub, as it is called, consists of a dense wood of a dwarf species of gum-tree, *Eucalyptus Dumosa*. This tree, not more than a dozen feet in height, stretches its horizontal and rigid branches around it so as to form with its congeners a close, compact mass. So close is it that you may travel for scores of miles through

it, and see no trace of any vegetation but itself and a species of twining plant, which runs like cords amongst it, and as it were knits and ties it up into an impenetrable mass. Where vegetation does prevail, it is generally the sharp and inhospitable needle-grass, a grass the blades of which are like wires, and every one of which terminates with a point sharp and keen as a needle. This grass affords little or no nourishment to the horse of the traveller, but, where he is obliged to traverse it, wounds and stings his legs fearfully. Woe, therefore, to the wanderer who finds himself involved in the mazes of the fearful Mallee scrub. He may nominally make his way to some distance, but the impenetrable thickets compel him to turn hither and thither, and soon he is completely bewildered, and eventually brought to a dead stand, not knowing how to advance or retreat. Hence the skeletons of many a lost traveller lie bleaching in the melancholy wastes of Mallee scrub.

The only access to any given point is that made by the axe; and along such a passage between the walls of this scrub our travellers advanced. There was no turning right or left, and so destitute of animal life was the scene, that for a score of miles that they rode through it they did not see or hear a bird or frog, or perceive so much as a lizard en-

livening by its motion the soundless and wearisome jungle.

Issuing from this tedious and unattractive region, they found themselves in a vast sandy desert. Low sandhills, covered with a thinly scattered wood of blue-looking gums, extended on their right hand; and before them stretched an arid, sandy plain, sparsely scattered with low bushes, and clothed with a rigid vegetation resembling heather. Both they and their horses were wearied with their two days' rapid journey. They looked round and onward in vain for a trace of water; they listened for the ever-welcome sound of frogs. There was no such cheering note. All was dry, barren, and desolate. It was now August, a winter month verging on spring, and yet all was dry: they felt what it must be in the sultry summer months, more resembling a furnace than a habitable land.

For hours they rode on in great perplexity and anxiety. All track was lost. They might in this pathless desert of sand go on perhaps for days, and find no human habitation if they missed the one they were in quest of. It was not till now that they felt the hazardous nature of their undertaking. Without a guide, what should lead them to their goal? They stood still and held a council; the result of which

was to proceed no further across the plain, which appeared interminable, and by all accounts was only bounded by the terrible Mallee scrub. To the right they could perceive something like rocks, and they determined to direct their course thither. Their horses showed now every mark of exhaustion, and no wonder, for they had each of the two last days passed over more than seventy miles of ground, and some of it extremely rugged and difficult. They were evidently exhausted by intense thirst, and water was still the most hopeless of all things. The sun was fast descending the evening sky; and weary, both man and horse parched with heat and drought, for the day had been very warm, they toiled on for a couple of hours. The rocks, if they were such, seemed to recede at their approach, and they almost began to regard them as some delusion. At once, however, they perceived them grow more distinct. They soon clearly showed themselves as granite rocks, strangely wild, gray, and broken. On their backs stood up, ragged and sickly, a number of straggling pines, of the *Calitris* species which, like our Scotch fir, loves to take root in the driest crevices of the most barren and hot rocks. Between the rocks were several openings like little valleys, showing behind a most arid and adust region, as if

the very soil were only particles of decayed granite, and bearing a meagre forest of crooked and twisted stringy-barks. The aspect of the place was singularly desolate; and yet, in one of these openings, under the gray pile of rocks and overhung by several of the skeleton-like calitris, stood a wooden hut, rudely roofed with sheets of stringy-bark kept in their places by stones slung across it by ropes of cow-hide.

Humble and miserable as was the hut, our youths beheld it with feelings of unspeakable exultation. They took it for granted that it was inhabited, though they saw no smoke issue from its chimney, and not a creature appeared visible. Not a dog lay about the place, so universally the case at stations; not a fowl or a pigeon appeared below or above: but these, were they there, might have betaken themselves to roost. It was near sunset, yet the sun glared uncloudedly from the west across the waste of torrid sand, and the place seemed glowing in a red and fiery heat.

"If the place be tenantless," said Jonas, "what is to become of our horses? for neither grass nor water can exist here."

As he spoke, however, a large sheep-dog set up a wild bark somewhere on the top of the rocks, and appeared to be descending some hidden way, barking

furiously as he came. They looked up, and on the brow of the precipice opposite to them they beheld an object which filled them with astonishment. It was a short, thick figure of a man, as it seemed, but of a shortness and a thickness which amounted almost to monstrosity. The figure could not be more than four feet in height, and in size it was beyond all ordinary proportion to its altitude. It was clad in a scarlet shirt, which was stuffed into a pair of wide trowsers, which again disappeared in a large pair of jack-boots, there called Napoleons, only reaching to the knee. On his boots he wore a large pair of spurs, and a dark-coloured pair of braces made themselves conspicuous over his shirt: he had on no hat; but his head, which appeared large and solid, was covered with a bush of curling black hair, and his complexion at that distance appeared of a swarthy brown. This strange apparition stood motionless and profoundly silent, eyeing them attentively from his elevation, while the dog had descended; and after several circles made around them, barking vociferously, now drew itself up at the door of the hut, and showed its teeth, growling in a low tone.

"Good morning, mate," shouted Jonas to the strange object on the precipice; "any one at home?"

"I am here," said the figure laconically, without moving, and in a voice of extraordinary gruffness.

"If you are the sole tenant of the place," added Jonas, "we shall be extremely obliged to you for a night's rest, and refreshment for ourselves and horses."

"Does it look like a place where refreshment abounds?" replied the miserable figure.

"Well, not remarkably," replied Jonas; "but before we bandy any more compliments, just tell me, is this Mr. Randall's station?"

The "sturdy stump of a man," as Jonas called him, *sotto voce*, to Charles, took some little time to consider his answer, and when it came it was only, "And suppose it should be?"

"Then, if it should," rejoined Jonas, "it would be a blessing, for we have as little inclination to travel further in this sort of country as you, mate, have, as it would seem, to talk. If this be Mr. Randall's, we want to see him."

"Maybe," rejoined the figure; "but Mr. Randall is not at home."

"Then we must wait till he comes."

"Perhaps you may tire of that. Can you live on sand?"

Jonas now stared at the man, if man he were, and took as long a silence before answering.

"Not on sand, mate, but we could do tolerably on sandwiches; we are not particular, but we are in haste." And with this he and Charles dismounted, without ceremony, and determined to see what sort of quarters the place afforded. The strange, inhospitable kind of reception, from a creature as strange, was so totally out of character with the practice of the colony, that they were at a loss what to make of it; but they and their horses were both too much in need of refreshment and rest to stay wasting further words As they dismounted, however, the squat figure also began to descend from his eminence; and as they had just opened the door of the hut, where they saw nobody, he came up to them.

If they had been astonished at his appearance at a distance, they were tenfold more so on a close view. The man—for man it was—was evidently a dwarf; yet not a dwarf alone, but one of those remarkably strong-built persons who are called double-jointed. His legs in his boots bore some resemblance in thickness to those of elephants, at the same time that they were extremely short. His arms and hands were of equally massive size. His neck was like a little tower, and his head, though by no means dispropor-

tionate, was large, massy, and indicative of great strength, both physical and intellectual. His face, though of an almost copper hue, was rather handsome, and the expression singularly mild, though at this moment reserved and lowering.

The two youths stood before him in astonishment, not without awe. The place and the man taken together, had something weird and supernatural about them.

"Will you oblige me with your names, gentlemen?" said the ponderous little man, laying a huge hand on the handle of the door, and drawing the door to.

"Mine is Fitzpatrick," said Charles; the sturdy stump of a man gave no indication of its effect on him. "And mine is Popkins," said Jonas.

"Popkins!" There was the most instant change of the man's countenance. The cloud vanished, the caution was gone, his eyes flashed out a sunburst of light, and the hitherto taciturn person now exclaimed in a voice singularly soft: "Bravo! Mr. Popkins; I have been on the look out for you these four days on the hill. I congratulate you on your escape. Mr. Randall will be rejoiced. He will soon be at home." The door was flung open, the horses were led away. There was found an abundance of water and corn, and soon the two weary youths

were seated in the hut, where the kettle was speedily boiling for tea. It was wonderful to see the adroitness with which the bulky little man went about the duties of cook, notwithstanding his ungainly elephantine build. He came in with a load of wood on his shoulder, enough for a horse, and piled it carefully in a corner for the evening fire, observing that the nights were still very cold. He set a massive table in the middle of the room, lifting it as an ordinary man would lift the merest work-table. In a very little time he had the tea-things on the table, and kangaroo steaks frying on the fire, with a piece of cold beef, and a wattle-bird pie also ready on the board.

"You mistake me for my brother Abijah," said Jonas, sorrowfully, as the large little man was busy frying his steaks.

"What," said he; "are you not Mr. Abijah?" with a start that almost overset his frying-pan. "What is amiss, then? They have not taken him?"

"I am sorry to say they have," replied Jonas; "and my brother now lies in Castlemaine. He wants Mr. Randall to give evidence for him."

"Oh! Lord of mercy! In prison! Ay, they were within a hair of having Mr. Randall too. Good Lord alive! what is to be done! I was afraid they might be coming here after Mr. Randall, and that

gave the handle to
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of his build. Anon, he re
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and green greatly predominated,
boast of more than about two butto
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awake, and displayed a head of hair
and wild-looking whiskers of

life, and they had thus acquired this shape by clinging to the rounded body of the steed. Besides all this, he moved with a decided limp of the left leg. Can this be the Mr. Randall? each of the youths thought. Yet in the face of this man, on whom nature appeared to have been so niggard of her favours, or rather on whom she seemed to have wreaked her capricious spite, there was an expression of good nature, and a gentleness amounting to quiet, which quickly made them forget much of what first struck them. He put out a very freckled and sunburnt hand to welcome them with a cordial shake, and expressed, in a low and very cultured voice, his pleasure at seeing them, but his sorrow for the occasion. "I was quite in hopes," he said, "that my friend Abijah would have escaped the myrmidons; he is very active and quick in resource, but it seems, they were too nimble for him. Well, poor lad, we must not desert him. I expect they will take me too if I go; but go I must, for we must never fail our friends in trouble."

All this he said with a quiet propriety and feeling, which came very strikingly from a person of his exterior. He then begged his guests to be seated at table, and bade Crouchy, for so he called his extraordinary servant, place tea on the table at once, for he was himself consumed with thirst, and had no doubt

the young gentlemen were still more so after their ride. He had noticed the excellence of their horses in the stable, and said that two of them had been his, and had been sold by him in Melbourne, Bluebeard and Charles's cob. When he heard in what time they had accomplished the journey, he smiled, and said: "Yes, that is the having blood and breed in your cattle." As they proceeded with their meal he made himself master of the main facts of Abijah's case, and when he heard that the real onus of it rested on his proving an alibi for the last month, he said: "That I can soon do, if they admit my evidence, but perhaps they will expect me to prove one for myself; for having been seen with Abijah in the diggings, the police were bent on seizing me as an accomplice. If I had time, I could bring evidence from every inn and station between the Darling Downs and Melbourne to prove where Abijah and I were every day; but there is no time, if the trial goes on at once. But," added he, "I have my memorandum book, with all the items of purchase and expenditure at every place; I have the bills of every inn receipted; the receipts for horses purchased, and certificates of pedigree and soundness from some of the greatest breeders of horses in New South Wales, for I purchased on this last journey two hundred. That

surely will do. Yes! yes! that must do," he exclaimed, in increasing confidence, as he went on. "Bravo! Mr. Popkins! we shall bring your brother off!"

"Pray God," said Jonas, most earnestly, and appearing to gather great comfort from the assurance. Crouchy, the strange, double-jointed servant, stood all the time, listening with the utmost intentness, and on hearing this, rubbed his hands together, and cried "Tuckaroo! tuckaroo!" an expression which, whatever it meant besides, expressed wonderful satisfaction. Our young travellers observed that Crouchy had placed a plate and knife and fork for a fourth person, and imagined, in the easy life of the desert, that he meant to seat himself at table with them: but at this moment another personage made his appearance. This was a young man of most gentlemanly and aristocratic aspect. He was remarkably handsome, both in form and face. He was not tall, but approaching tallness. His features were of a peculiarly well defined and intellectual cast, delicate, and yet manly. He was clad in a shooting dress of gray plaid, of small pattern, coat, vest, and trowsers of one pattern. A brown wide-awake, turned up smartly at the sides, covered a head of glossy brown hair, which, when the hat was removed, displayed a

grace in its bearing and contour which extremely struck Charles, who felt that, whoever he was, he was a man of birth and family. What could he be doing here? What inducements could this hungry desert present to him? The young man, however, made a courteous inclination to the strangers, unslung his double-barrelled gun from his back, and handed a bag of game to Crouchy, who appeared most assiduous in his attentions to him. As this fresh arrival took his place at table, two magnificent Highland staghounds, here denominated kangaroo hounds, walked in, and stood behind him.

"What noble dogs!" exclaimed Charles. The gentleman, whom Randall addressed as Mr. Flavel, appeared pleased with the involuntary tribute of Charles's admiration, and turning, patted them on their heads, saying, "Yes, noble fellows they are. Crouchy, my boy, give them some water, will you, at once, for they are, I am sure, dying for it." Then, turning to Randall, he said, "We have had a long chace after an emu to-day, but it fairly beat us, by cutting right through your flock of breeding ewes, so that the shepherd drove the dogs back; and we have been to the Wimmera, and bagged some wild ducks."

"Mr. Flavel," said Randall abruptly, "do you

know that poor Abijah is taken, is in prison, and in danger of his life as an accomplice of those bush-rangers? I must be off with these young gentlemen in the morning, and leave you and Crouchy in charge."

"Is that true?" said Mr. Flavel, with evident sincerity of interest. "Well, I am very sorry, indeed; but they can't prove anything of the kind. You know, and can testify that."

"Ay," said Randall, "but who is to testify for me? For they snapped at me, too, and may again. Instead of a witness, I may come out an accused."

"No, no," replied Mr. Flavel, "I will take care of that. I will go and authenticate you."

"Will you, though?" exclaimed Randall, delighted. "Bravo! then I care for nothing. Your testimony is all sufficient."

"Well then, you shall have it; it is settled."

The party now continued the conversation in the highest spirits. Numerous matters were introduced, which greatly interested Charles. Randall and Mr. Flavel described the country round, and their mode of life, for it appeared that Flavel was, and had been, for a good while, a regular resident here. He learned that though this district was barren and desolate in the extreme, there were here and there, on

the extensive run, plains of better pasturage, especially in the direction of the lakes Kuron and Hindmarsh. In the woods, there were cattle runs which, in winter, afforded some pasturage and shelter, and in summer, the cattle migrated towards the waters of the Wimmera, north of Hindmarsh, and found tolerable supply of green food. There was, on the sandy wastes, also, a species of salt scrub, on which the sheep grew fat, where a stranger would imagine they must perish; and then, as for sport, which all these dwellers in the deserts of Bullarook appeared equally to be enthusiasts in, there were emus on the plains, kangaroos in the distant forest pastures, and abundance of wild fowl on the lakes, and on the reaches of the Wimmera. They described the double valley of the Wimmera, descending north-west from the Grampians, as a most attractive scene of fertility and beauty, thickly studded with stations, and swarming with stock.

A most friendly feeling had sprung up between the different individuals of the party before they retired for the night, not even excepting the extraordinary specimen of humanity, Crouchy, who entered with a perfectly enthusiastic passion into all the details of the life there. Charles gave the most cordial invitation to both Flavel and Randall to Tallangetta,

assuring them that they would find good sport there. At bed-time, Charles and Jonas were shown into a small room, where they saw a capacious travelling portmanteau, with "Augustus Flavel, Esq.," stamped in black letters on its tan leather top, and on a little shelf, where were piled a number of books. Charles took down, with some surprise, the Latin Orations of Cicero, the Dialogues of Plato, the Eumenides of Æschylus, and the Antigone and Œdipus of Sophocles. In short, on that little shelf were lodged such a set of books as he would never have sought for in any bush home of the colony. Shakspere, well handled, appeared the only English book allowed to associate with the great dramatists and philosophers of Greece. What, again Charles asked himself, can this Mr. Flavel be doing here?

By peep of day Charles and Jonas were up, and found breakfast on table, Crouchy filling the teapot, and with a good stock of provisions packed to be tied on the saddle of a led horse. Soon appeared Randall and Flavel, equipped for their journey; Randall in the same old garb as yesterday; Mr. Flavel in a handsome Oxonian, and a pair of beautifully-cut light jack-boots. They sat down to breakfast, and sought to make good use of their time. In the midst of the repast Charles looked across the table to Mr. Flavel,

to whom he had addressed an observation which received no answer, and was struck with an extraordinary sensation at his appearance. His hands rested on the table on each side of his plate, his knife and fork having, it appeared, been quietly dropped on the plate. He sat looking as at the opposite wall, but there was "no speculation in those eyes." His face was calm and motionless as if in sleep; yet his eyes were open, but had a most singular expression. They appeared to be looking at no particular object; on the contrary, there seemed, as it were, a curtain drawn down over the iris, and the vision, if there were any, to be within.

Charles turned with astonishment towards Mr. Randall, who lifted his finger, signifying that he should take no notice, himself proceeding with his breakfast as if nothing particular had occurred, and went on speaking to Charles of the shortest route to Castlemaine. In about five minutes Mr. Flavel moved, and drew a deep breath as if awaking from sleep, resumed his knife and fork and his breakfast, and said to Mr. Randall, as if in the most ordinary course of circumstances, "Well, I can't go with you."

"No!" said Randall. "Why not?"

"Why, do you know my brother George is the

counsel for the crown in this case. It would never do for me to appear."

"Oh, heavens, no!" said Randall. "How unfortunate!"

"It is most unfortunate," resumed Mr. Flavel, while Charles and Jonas looked from one to the other, perfectly confounded with the news, but far more with the wonder whence it could have come. Here, at this distance, at this table, at this moment, in this almost unpeopled and inaccessible desert, to be told this!

"My sister says," Mr. Flavel went on, "that not only is George the leading counsel in the case, but that he has made up his mind secretly as to the guilt of every man taken; that he will bend every effort to condemn the prisoner you are interested in, and that he will bear extremely, severely, perseveringly hard upon you. I am greatly concerned."

"But why on me?" exclaimed Randall, evidently considerably alarmed. "Why on me? He knows me not; he has no suspicion that you are here; how can it be? How comes he in Victoria at all?"

"He has been here this six months. Something disgusted him at Sydney, where he was carrying all before him, and he has been invited here by his

Excellency, who knew him years ago in America, and who gives him all the weight of his influence."

Randall looked actually confounded. He grew pale; knit his brow, as in vexation, and gave to his mouth an expression of great chagrin and yet of dogged firmness. Charles and Jonas were utterly bewildered. To hear this clever, aristocratic young man, so intelligent, so calm, so sober, talking of things impossible, as it seemed, as plain facts which they might have then and there learned from a morning paper, if there had been such a thing: to hear Flavel talk of his sister as his informant — where was she? If here, how had she communicated with him at table in the midst of breakfast? At once it flashed on Charles. He is mad! That is it! How sad in such a fine young man of his education! And yet, in Randall, that could be no feigned feeling, meant to take the patient's lunacy as sanity; it was no acting, it was real feeling, and vexation and alarm. The mystery was past any solving.

But breakfast was now over. Up rose all and prepared to depart. Randall snatched up his whip, shook hands with Flavel most warmly, and asked for his prayers while away. "I will not be longer than I can help," he added. "I will not impose any duties on you more than is necessary; but Crouchy will put

out his wonderful energies and relieve you all he can."

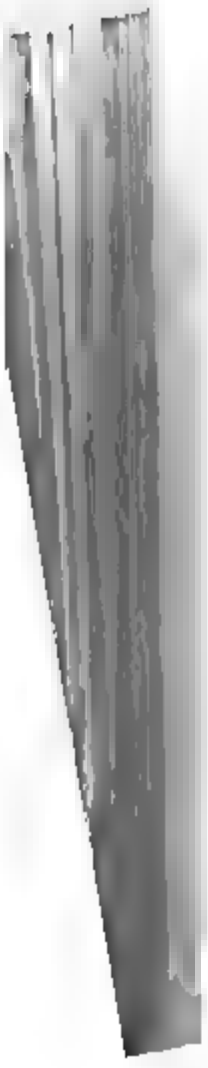
Crouchy looked highly delighted at this praise, and said, in an energetic tone, "Ay, ay; never fear about Crouchy."

Mr. Flavel took a most friendly leave of the two youths. Sympathies of rank and education seemed to draw him strongly to Charles, and he promised to pay him an early visit. They mounted their horses, which Crouchy had ready at the door, and rode away at a great speed.

They took a short cut through the granite wilderness, and had ridden some miles, when they saw a horseman coming at full gallop down a glade to the right. It was Flavel! His horse was in a foam, showing the speed at which he had ridden. He drew up close to Randall, and said, "I learnt after you were gone that all will go well; and I wanted you to know it; it will make you at your ease. But one thing you must do. When George is driving you hard, and interrogating you mercilessly as to your own identity, as he will, ask him ——" Here the speaker dropped his voice and whispered the rest into Randall's ear. "That will settle it," he said, with a smile of triumph; and Randall, with looks of astonishment, replied, "My God!" he could utter

[illegible] Then they [illegible] each [illegible] [illegible] Randall [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"Your question," said Randall, "is perfectly natural, and I would have given you some explanation, but every moment is so precious, that I avoided entering into engrossing conversation. But now I most willingly explain to you what must have appeared so extraordinary. There is no secret necessary regarding it, between friends, for Mr. Flavel makes none. Mr. Flavel is member of an ancient family, which has large estates in Ireland. He is heir to the ancient barony of Dunallen. In this family there runs a peculiarity which, ever and anon, in the course of ages, shows itself in a species of second-sight. In the Dunallens it is something more, for they not merely see the phantasmal pictures of coming events, they become frequently, and without warning, aware of the spirits of the dead, and hold communication with them, as with their living friends. It is a condition like that which has attached to various eminent men, as Swedenborg, and Zschokke, who became frequently involuntarily conscious of the life, history, and state of certain people in whose company they happened to be. In Mr. Flavel, this occurs in a species of brief trance, during which he is utterly unconscious of what passes around him: but appears to be absent from the visible world, present with the invisible, and



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There is said to be a wonder
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from his native country, and keep himself concealed for a certain term, or he would be secured as insane, and his next and only brother, a man of an ambitious and bad character, would be empowered to hold and administer his estates for him. The old Lord Dunallen, a worthy, but weak man, had been wrought upon by this second son to agree to this course, which the son represented as necessary to prevent both serious disgrace and disasters to the family. That term of years is now nearly run: Mr. Flavel's sister assures him, that he is now safe, or you would not have heard these particulars from me. The old man, however, whose eyes have been opened by the daring presumption, and arbitrary, and dishonest acts of his second son, receives frequent assurances of his eldest son's safety and affection. The second son, George, disappointed in his schemes on the estate, and refused any further aid from his father, has qualified himself for, and received a call to the bar, and is, it seems, practising here with brilliant success. So much for Mr. Flavel, whose acquaintance I made some years ago in Melbourne, and who asked me to secure him a retreat where, in profound seclusion, he could enjoy his books and the chase. Could he be more entirely hidden in any corner of

the earth, yet with free range of river, waste, and wood, than at Bullarook?"

"That is a wonderful story," said Charles Fitzpatrick. "And do you really find Mr. Flavel's spiritual revelations borne out by the fact?"

"Of that," said Mr. Flavel, "you will very soon be able to judge. You heard that he guarantees that all will go well at the trial: that I shall be hard run by the crown counsel, who is to be his brother, a matter wholly unknown to me, and on which I have never till this morning heard a word; and, finally, he has given me a message, which he says will at once confound and defeat this brother, the hostile counsel. We shall see."

"And this Crouchy too," said Charles; "what an extraordinary creature; wherever did you meet with him?"

Randall smiled. "Mr. Fitzpatrick," he said, "you may well wonder; truly my house must seem a refuge of oddities and incurables. I myself am no Cupid or Adonis; Mr. Flavel appears to ordinary eyes a visionary, if not something more—a madman; and Crouchy, there are those who, suddenly encountering him in the forest, have believed him the devil. You say he is extraordinary; he is more extraordinary than he looks: Nature has given him an uncouth,

but a most amazingly powerful frame. His father was an English sailor; his mother an Abyssinian. He possesses incredible strength, and passions of equal violence. It was this strength, enclosed in this form, like a giant crushed down into a dwarf, which was his snare and bane. Being a mockery at home, and made vengeful by insult, an artful monster prevailed on him to escape with him to this hemisphere, promising him the post of a shepherd or a stockman in these woods. Crouchy is passionately, madly fond of horseback; he jumped at the proposal, and in a few months found himself, in Sydney, and then in Melbourne, exhibited as a prodigy of ugliness and gigantic power. The feats of that strength are said to be incredible, and the lucky kidnapper was apparently on the road to fortune. Hopillipopo, the Dwarf-King of the Mountains of Chipango, whose strength exceeded that of fifty men, was a splendid property. But Crouchy had a soul peculiarly sensitive to wrong; he raged inwardly at the treachery practised upon him, and at the indignities he was daily made to endure. He became rebellious to this keeper's tyranny, and this led to increased coercion, and to cruelties utterly monstrous. This could not last. It was only the terror of fresh insults, if he ventured abroad amongst the rude population of the

colony, which retained him in submission. But outrage and contempt have their limits. Crouchy is vindictive in resentment as he is faithful to devotion in gratitude for kindness. One evening, when his master brought him his food, and bade him prepare for the night's exhibition, he seized him, in his rage, bound him neck and knees together with a cord which he had secreted, locked the door upon him, and escaped into the darkness. It was on my way between Melbourne and Mount Cole, that one day as I sat in the solitary forest, wofully depressed by sorrows of my own, and even tempted to thoughts of self-destruction, sitting by my fire, this startling figure suddenly appeared before me. I am not superstitious, but I felt my blood arrested in my veins, my heart ceased to beat; I verily believed that my impious despair had called up the Prince of Darkness. Poor Crouchy; he was dressed, not in his present favourite style, but in a close-fitting, flame-coloured garment, meant to display his massive build and muscular development; a short skirt of light blue encircled his hips, and his black, raven-black, and curly hair, to my surprised imagination, appeared like Medusa's snakes. But he soon made known his sad tale. He was famishing with hunger, not having dared to show himself to any one till he saw my

fascinating features. But I freely confess that I never felt a compliment so flattering in my life — God knows I have never received many — as that of thus being the first creature in which this poor outcast felt that he could repose confidence. There was an end to my despair too, when my thoughts were directed from my own ills to the shameful wrongs of another. I refreshed him, made him mount one of my horses, and Crouchy has now been for two years the inhabitant of Bullarook. If there be a noble soul in a dishonouring body, it is Crouchy's. He thinks Flavel little less than divine; every word of his is to him gospel, for he has seen the wonderful truth of his words. As for me, he serves me as the man who first treated him as a fellow-man. On my wide and straggling station, he is worth a score of common stockmen. He is here, there, everywhere; and there is an atmosphere of superstitious terror surrounding him that is an army of protection in itself. You should see that short bulky figure mounted on Snob, his favourite tall horse, flying through storm, or fog, or twilight. It is something equally grotesque and startling. You should hear the fearful shriek which he sends through the woods when the wild dogs are at the flock at midnight. It is enough to make the stranger's heart stand still; the very dingoes steal

away silently at the sound to their lairs. But, above all, you should see him in the excitement of the chase of the wild bull through the granite hills and amid the iron-bark forest. Then his Abyssinian blood is up indeed — then he is all one glow and fury of delight, careering like a demon, pistol in hand, after the tremendous animal; and it is wonderful to see how, when the infuriated beast turns upon him in madness, he will ride up into his very face, and — there is a report, and the huge creature drops dead at his feet. In these scenes Crouchy is immensely happy, and even to me terrible. Many a time man and horse, meeting him in his headlong rides, have wheeled round in sudden affright, and gone back at full gallop. Many a time, when he has been following Mr. Flavel in the chase, often crawling on all fours amongst the scrub, or climbing some tree or rock, to bring down his game, the solitary shepherd has scudded away in terror; and there are rumours now far and wide in the bush — for I come ever and anon across them — that in the desert of Bullarook there actually haunts a terrible sorcerer and his imp. Who can wonder who sees them? Who can help smiling who knows them? Would to God that the earth had plenty of such men, as true, as generous, and as good; but

with the graces of Flavel rather than the grimness of Crouchy."

Such was the relation of Randall to the deeply interested young men at their evening fire. They then rolled themselves up in their rugs, and slept till the laughing jackass awoke them. The next evening saw them at Castlemaine.

CHAP. XIII.

THE TRIAL.

OUR two young emissaries had made such expedition that they were in Castlemaine three days before the day of trial. Three anxious long days they seemed to all those who were interested in the fate of the prisoners. The friends of Abijah Popkins had been as active as they were certain to be with such a man as Mr. Peter Martin at work in the matter. They had hunted up, arranged, and had already assembled such a host of evidence on behalf of Abijah prior to his departure with Randall, as left no doubt on that part of the story. There were various deeds of atrocity done by the Douglas and Melville gang in various parts of the country, which, however, concerned Abijah not at all; for during all that time he was living rather too publicly, but still most unconcernedly, as regarded all but himself and wife, before the people of Bendigo. His position, too, as

proprietor of a wealthy and successful store, made the attempt to charge him with acts of violence and plunder appear ridiculous. But he had been away a month, the Bendigo public knew not where; he was considered wild, and fond of his glass; they saw his wife left to the cares of a heavy and responsible concern, wearing an aspect of anxiety; and when Abijah returned, the first thing heard of him by many was that he appeared with a very suspicious-looking stranger, and was surprised by the police in the midst of the most desperate and sanguinary gang of bush-rangers in the colony. These were heavy facts against him, and the government was disposed to use every possible severity, and to make a striking example of the parties taken. Mr. Martin had secured able counsel for the prisoner, but the fame of the new man, who, as attorney-general of the colony, was coming against them, was high and appalling. All the prisoner's friends saw how much would depend on the evidence and still more on the character of the man whom he had been professedly absent with. Mr. Martin, spite of his protested confidence, as the day approached could not shake from him a growing and depressing anxiety. The mother as well as the wife of Abijah was come. The friends had been with the prisoner, and though perfectly convinced of his innocence of

any charge against him, yet, the scenes in the prison were said to have been of the most appalling and heart-rending character. The young wife, spite of her enfeebled frame, which had not recovered the shock of Abijah's apprehension supervening on a long course of anxiety and tension of mind, had borne up admirably while with her husband, but every night on returning home fell into repeated faintings, and it required all the skill of the kind Dr. Roche, and the cheering assurances of the indefatigable Mr. Martin, to keep her up. The poor old mother, grave, religious, but deeply feeling, while she comforted her son, who was of a timid nature, and was now sorely cast down, on retiring to her own lodgings, walked to and fro with a face of woe that would have touched the hardest nature, and continually repeated to herself: "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved: if this thing befalls me, what good will my life do me? Help us, good God!" The old man was silent, stern, but evidently consumed by the heaviest inward misery.

When Mr. Martin was introduced to Randall, in whom he expected to find a well-to-do and well arrayed squatter, he could not conceal his astonishment and chagrin. Was this the man whose character and evidence were to save the accused? Was this the

main pillar on which the fabric of his defence rested? For a little time, with all his practised command of self, he could not avoid letting his disappointment appear most broadly. He was dumb. In a while, however, he recovered himself, and said: "You are Mr. Randall?" "Yes." "You are the squatter of Bullarook?" "Certainly." "You are aware, I hope, what an amount of responsibility rests on you in this case." "I am quite aware," replied Randall, calmly.

"That is well," said Mr. Martin, still pausing. "You can give positive proof that Abijah Popkins, the prisoner, was with you during the whole of the last month, and with you in occupation wholly creditable."

"Mr. Martin," said Randall, "let us be frank with each other. You are surprised at my appearance. Nature made me partly what I am, folly, sorrow, and penance have made up the rest. I am under a vow to myself to live hardly, to labour incessantly, to go meanly clad; to wear such a garb and manner that few shall court my society, and those only who can see a man through his rags, if necessary. I shun the world, except so far as is necessary to business and the acquisition of a sum which will set my heart and my honour at ease. Is that enough?

Think not of me, but of what I can do." And with that he laid before Mr. Martin the proofs which he had for the trial. The opening observations of Randall arrested the fixed attention of Mr. Martin; as he proceeded he was struck with surprise and pleasure at the purity of his language, the high character of his motives and principles, and when he ceased to speak, Mr. Martin seized him by the hand, and shaking it warmly, said: "Mr. Randall, you have made me feel that I have to do with a man of a thousand. You have revived my confidence. We must succeed; but I wish we could subpœna those squatters and innkeepers in your list; and one or two of the nearest we can and will." And the two went out together to send off at once for these gentlemen.

The day of trial came. The sun rose brightly and warm over that new town of Castlemaine; over that wide new square or market place; over the brown bare rocks, and stringy-bark woods which looked down upon it. Thousands of people, men and women, diggers and squatters, were assembled to witness the trials of the bushrangers, and other interesting cases which had to be heard. The police were drawn up in strong detachments in front of the court-house. Mounted police were seen riding in troops to and fro near the government camp, as if in readiness on any

emergency, and yet not so near as to alarm the sensitive nature of independent justice, and of freedom-loving Englishmen. Lawyers were seen hurrying towards the court-house with their blue bags, and the judge now advanced from his lodgings attended by the sheriff and his retinue.

How many a heart beat anxiously at that moment. We are now in the court, amid a crowding, crushing throng; it is with difficulty we gain the seat allotted to us, and there already behold the judge on the bench, and the sheriff and chief commissioner seated by his side. There is the table at which the counsel are busy unfolding their papers, and hastily glancing over their briefs; and there stands a prisoner in the dock, with a powerful-looking turnkey at his side. It is one of the bushrangers. The attorney-general rises and opens the case against him. What a very different man from our Mr. Flavel: can they really be brothers? This man is tall, powerfully built, with a face firm, eagle-eyed, eagle-nosed, clever, daring, with an audacity unrelieved by one visible touch of tender feeling. What a story he tells, what a catalogue he produces of atrocities and villanies. The blood of the hearers first chills, then warms, then grows hot with indignation against such monsters, and their blasphemous jests, and their

demoniac cruelties. There is but one feeling in the court, it is the demand for speedy death to the whole crew. The fellow, who is the first on whom this thunderbolt of accusation falls, is a great, strong knave, with a hooked nose, a huge black beard, and dark eyes, that beneath black, shaggy eyebrows flash fury on the lawyer. His teeth grind in impotent rage as he listens, but no one appears to offer a word in his defence: he is condemned. There is another; and another; unknown, undefended villains, with the curse of Cain written palpably on their brows. They hear their doom, and are drawn away. There is now a pause, — a deep, awful pause,—you hear your watches tick, your hearts beat; the deep-drawn breath of some anxious spectator near you. There is a slight shuffle of feet beyond the table of the counsel, and there stands in the dock a slim, pale youth, not more than two or three and twenty, clad in simple black, and with a look fixed on the judge as if he already expected the fatal word which should send him to the gallows. Near him in the court, but lower, and partly screened by the partition of the dock, you behold a huddled trembling group; it is the family of the prisoner. There are several men's heads, they are all bowed down; but two countenances are fixed fully,

firmly on the prisoner. They are women's faces, — pale as death, but resolute in the love which conquers terror, so that it may sustain the tried one in his trial. Whoever saw those faces will never forget them while they live; the young one like a bloodless spirit, watching the beloved one at the day of Judgment, knowing that there was danger, yet hoping against hope, and unshaken in the eternity of its love: the elder one so rigid, so dignified, and so profound in its affliction. By the side of the young wife sat the ever watchful doctor.

That terrible attorney-general rose. He reminded the jury of the culprits already so justly doomed. He remarked on the different sort of person now before them: young in years, but, he was afraid, deep in crime. He drew a striking picture of the affliction and disgrace which he had brought on a highly respectable, and, as he had heard, truly religious family. He asserted that he felt deeply for this unhappy family, but that his duty to his country did not allow him to be moved by it. Young as the prisoner was, and well connected as he was, he had shown that he was a most dangerous character, fond of bad company, of drinking, and gambling; leaving a good home, and an admirable wife, for wild adventures with the most desperate men. Such a man,

gentle and timid even as he might there look, was capable, when excited, of perpetrating the most fearful actions. He might, and probably would, if not early checked, become a captain of highwaymen, as ferocious and truculent as Douglas or Melville. He believed there would be an attempt to prove an alibi on all occasions where the gang to which he belonged had done their worst deeds. To a certain extent, that might succeed, but there was a considerable period during which he had disappeared from home, which would require the most powerful proofs to free from suspicion, and on the last scene, there could be no mystification possibly thrown. All there was clear, too clear, indeed. The prisoner was found actually at cards with the leaders of the gang, in one of their most notorious haunts. He was actually hob-nobbing with that fiend incarnate, called the Black Douglas, and that smooth, but sanguinary villain, the so-called Captain Melville. With these he burst forth through the police, and by them two of the police were murdered on the spot, by which of the desperadoes it were impossible to say.

It would not be possible to tell the effect of this address, taken with what had gone before, on all interested in the prisoner. He himself looked as if all were lost. No words, no pencil, scarcely could

paint the agony of those two female faces, still riveted immovably on his form. The attorney-general called his witnesses. We shall not particularise them. They went to prove Abijah's wildness, his absence, and his presence at the surprise of the bushrangers. The only thing in his favour was, that not a man was produced to swear distinctly that he saw him shoot either of the policemen. But without that, it was bad enough,—the being mixed up with the possibility of it,—with being *one* of those who undoubtedly did it.

The counsel for the defence now arose. He drew a very different picture of Abijah; as of an amiable youth, but fond of pleasure, weak in its resistance, but by no means criminal; and he undertook to prove an alibi for every day for the last twelve months, and to within ten minutes of the very moment when the police came down upon the grog-shop. He declared that he would produce a most respectable witness, who had him in his service, and with him in distant places, till within that ten minutes. Men, he said, do not grow into bushrangers in ten minutes. He would show that the unfortunate youth merely went to pay a bill, and was beguiled by the villains, totally unknown to him, to play; but that, even then, his friends had him in

sight, as it were, and were hastening to fetch him away.

A most profound attention possessed the whole court. The counsel called his witnesses; and, certainly, the exertions of Mr. Martin and Abijah's other friends had not been trivial. There were some dozens of persons who came forward, or were ready to come forward, to bear testimony to his character as totally free from, and totally wanting in, motive for the commission of any such crimes. They proved that he was at home on all those occasions when the gang had done deeds of violence in other places. And now came the turn of Randall, that most respectable witness, who was to cover by his evidence the rest of the time to the very moment of the attack. When, therefore, he stepped into the witness-box, there was a sensation of astonishment through the whole court. People rose up and leaned forward to get a better view of this extraordinary witness. There was a buzz of exclamations and of conversation through the whole place. The attorney-general stared at the shabby-looking man, in his old thread-bare riding coat, his plain, pitted face, half lost in a bush of yellowish hair, and the limping gait with which he reached his place. The attorney-general

smiled, a smile which said distinctly—"So this is your most respectable evidence!"

The witness, however, stood cool and quiet. The counsel by his questions led him to show where he and Abijah had been during the month; that Abijah had only come to take leave of his wife before going away with him to his station on a long visit, and that seeing him enter the grogshop to pay a bill, he felt the danger of the place, and hurried out his horses to fetch him away. He was too late; the police were down on the place, and his friend had fled out in alarm; but he would swear positively that Abijah could not have shot one of the men, for he had no pistol in his possession.

The attorney-general now cross-questioned him. He said that he did not disguise it that he thought the witness was in the wrong place, that it was not the witness-box but the dock in which he ought to appear. He would demand a strict account of himself, as well as of the prisoner at the bar. He would, however, take the case of the prisoner first, and he demanded more proof that he and the prisoner were at the places on the business alleged. Randall at once produced his memorandum book, showing the bills paid and the business done at the different places. The attorney-general declared that this book

might be a forgery got up for the purpose. Where were the people whose names appeared to different bills? Randall replied, that if time were given him, he would produce every one, but short as the time was, he believed there were two or three in court. His counsel at once brought forward three most highly respectable squatters, who proved as many items and gave the highest character of the witness. They knew him to be a substantial and most honourable squatter. This turned affairs amazingly. But the attorney-general would still have proof that the prisoner at the bar was on all these occasions there. Randall pointed out his signature to various memorandums in the book, for he had frequently kept the accounts. "How are we to know that these are the prisoner's signatures?" demanded the lawyer.

The judge here said, "Hand the prisoner a pen and paper; let him sign his name." It was done, and the name and Randall's book handed up to the bench. The judge pronounced the signatures perfectly identical, perfectly satisfactory. There was a buzz of approbation throughout the court: all now began to pronounce the prisoner innocent in their own minds. The threadbare, shabby, limping man had thoroughly proved his case. There was a manifest triumph in the court on behalf of the prisoner.

But the attorney-general, who had calculated on condemning the whole batch, felt like a lion defrauded of his prey. He was mortified beyond expression that he should be thus foiled by a man who had, by his very shabby appearance, raised his expectations of success to certainty, and who he hoped would afford him good matter for the display of his wit. He, therefore, now turned upon him savagely. He declared that it was necessary to know something more of the witness himself. They must have some good proofs that he was worthy of credit.

"That has been satisfactorily attested," said the judge.

"But your honour, permit me," said the attorney-general. "Randall? Randall?—were you not some years ago connected with the turf in England?"

"Yes."

"Ha! I thought so! And you disappeared, leaving a good many engagements undischarged?"

"That is quite true," replied Randall.

"Oh! so you admit that. We shall now see what your evidence is worth." A gloomy, disappointed silence fell on the people. The judge, however, said, "Witness, you may bear in mind that you are a witness, not a prisoner at the bar."

"Thank your honour," said Randall with emotion;

"but pray allow the counsel to go on as he pleases."

"Very well, then," said the attorney-general, bitterly. "Why did you abscond?"

"That I might find means to discharge my just obligations."

"Have you done that?"

"I have in great part. These obligations were 10,000*l.*: I have paid 8,000*l.* Here are the accounts and the vouchers.'

They were handed up to the bench. The judge carefully looked them over, and returned them; saying emphatically: "Most honourable, most praiseworthy."

"But," continued the inexorable lawyer, "why hide yourself in a desert? Why not walk openly where your fellow-men can see you? Why all this mystery and seclusion? I would know that this is all honest. Money is made in strange ways here often."

"A celebrated poet, one Churchill, can answer that for me," said Randall:—

> "'Would'st thou be safe? Society forswear!
> Fly to the desert, and seek shelter there;
> Herd with the brutes,—they follow nature's plan:
> There's not a brute so dangerous as man.'"

"So," said the lawyer, "you read poetry, eh?

Quite pastoral, really! Perhaps you could give us some further account of yourself in rhyme?"

"No doubt of it, from the same clever hand," continued Randall, smiling:—

"'Let it be bruited all about the town
That he is coarse, indelicate, and brown—
An antidote to lust: his face all scarred
With the small-pox, his body maimed and marred.
Should'st thou report him as by nature made,
He is undone, and by thy praise betrayed.'"

There was a burst of applause and laughter in the court. The judge, though smiling himself, commanded order. All were struck by the philosophic spirit of the man who could thus serenely describe his own personal defects.

"And now, sir," continued Randall, taking the offensive; "as you seem to like my quotations, I will give you one more portrait:—

"'Bred to the law, he from the first
Of all bad lawyers was the worst;
Who will, for him, may boast of sense,—
His better guard is impudence;
His front, with tenfold plates of brass
Secured, shame never yet could pass;
Nor on the surface of his skin
Blush for the guilt which dwells therein.'"

At this the burst of laughter was renewed with universal uproar. The judge declared he would clear the court. The attorney-general, purple with rage, cried — "Sirrah, peace! This is intolerable. You insult the whole bar, the whole profession. I command you to be silent and answer my questions."

"Sir," said Randall, "I have answered you many questions that have nothing whatever to do with the cause at issue; and now your position shall not protect you. I throw myself on the justice of the court, on the impartial spirit of my country's laws. I insist that you answer me one question. You have dared to probe my life, and endeavoured to blast my reputation before the world,— answer me this:—What did your father say when, at your vehement and repeated solicitation, he granted you a last secret interview beneath the Banshee Oak in Dunallen Park?"

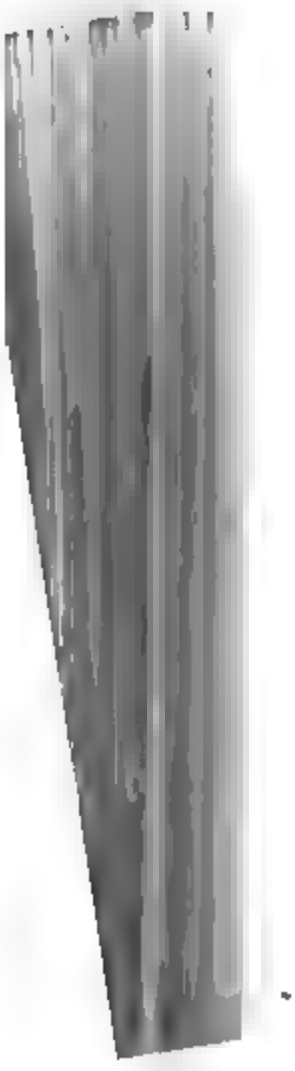
The haughty lawyer stood arrested at that question as by a supernatural blow which turned him to a statue. He appeared petrified by astonishment. "My father! the Banshee Oak!" he stammered.

"Yes, your father! the Banshee Oak!" said Randall, outwardly calm, yet plainly and justly incensed. "Your father, the venerable Lord Dunallen. Do you not see him," said the homely-looking squatter, rising, as if inspired, and pointing to a par-

ticular part of the court, all eyes, including those of the terror-stricken lawyer, mechanically following his finger — "do you not see him now, leaning on his cane, shaken by grief as by a palsy, and his bare white head gleaming in the moonlight, as he says solemnly:—'You have banished your brother; you have killed your mother by a broken heart; you have disgraced your family; you have deceived and left utterly desolate your father, who now stands here alone before God in his age. May you repent, repent; for rather would I see you lying dead on that sod, than that the people of the Dunallen estates should ever fall into your power in your present unchristian, unregenerate temper.'"

There was a sensation throughout the court, as if a thunderbolt had fallen on it. A death-like silence prevailed, and the proud counsel, who so lately had borne down all before him by his talent and audacity, suddenly dropped on his seat, with his head on the table, and was even sliding to the floor, when some of the other counsel caught him, and had him borne from the court.

The sensation throughout the crowd was inconceivable. No words could describe it. People, lawyers, all present sprung to their feet; all sense of order was lost. There was one loud buzz of voices



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woman, and carries her to t
driven home in a carriage w
Peter Martin, all life and rac
fighting his way through th
the court —'

CHAP. XIV.

A STARTLING EVENT — THE DIGGERS' RUSH.

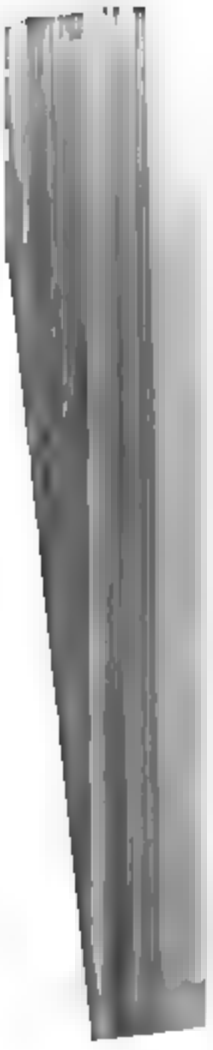
We could willingly linger a long time relating all the joyful results of the remarkable trial described in the last chapter, but circumstances are already forming themselves which will very speedily close our narrative at the antipodes. We must hasten on. Enough that we say that there was joy unbounded in the family of the Popkinses. The misguided Abijah had sown his wild oats; the crop was not to his taste, it was bitterer than wormwood. Gladly he and his admirable little wife, looking still pale but happy, took their leave for the mill of Lahni with the aged parents, quiet, but much forgiving and thanksgiving. The buoyant-hearted Mr. Peter Martin rode along with them on his Bluebeard, never tired of talking of the trial, and of that wonderful *coup-de-main* of what he called the sandy-hued squatter of Bullarook. That arrogant but condignly punished attorney-general, he told them, had thrown up the rest of his briefs at the assizes, resigned his office, it was said, and gone, no one knew

whither, and no one, as he believed, cared. So they rode on to Lahni, whither Mr. Martin in a day or two brought his wife and daughter to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Patty Popkins. The Martin ladies were greatly taken with her, and with her enthusiastic delight in the delicious valley of Lahni. Already she looked more like a blooming, bright-eyed little fairy, than the pale agitated wife of the digging store; and already Abijah was soberly carrying corn-sacks in and meal-bags out of the mill, his coat and face most befitting, powdered with flour, and watching the meal come pouring silently down into the receptive hopper.

Charles Fitzpatrick rode blithely home, for he had helped to do a good and kindly deed. No fear of his father's anger haunted him, for he had been thrown against Mr. Peter Martin it is true, but he had not stuck there, but had been also hastily jostled in a heap of equally eager and gregarious men. He left Barks and Purdy behind him, bent on subterranean fortune. At home all was brightness and welcome. Spring was coming round with its greenness and its flowers. His father asked after his nuggets, and joked him merrily on his take in by the Blessed Ben and Holy Joe. Aunt Judith had young pigeons, young fowls, young ducks, young 'possums,

young parrots, young native companions, and young kangaroos in the orchard paddock, and at the huts, to show him. Geordy had discovered new rides; and David Rannock had most interesting information of emus and wild turkeys that he had seen in his traverses of the run. All was smiling, sunny, and homelike. No mischief had come from any quarter; and his father had arrived at the conclusion that Dr. Woolstan's spiritual stories and messages were all "bosh."

Charles found that a great deal of visiting had been going on amongst his family and the neighbours. The Woolstans, the Metcalfes, the Quarriers were constantly quoted, and were very often there to save quotation and speak for themselves. Aunt Judith and old Mrs. Quarrier had "kicked up," as the father called it, "a desperate friendship;" and Geordy and Mrs. Poncefort were in a most affectionate league. The two women had made their rides together as far as the Quarriers, the Metcalfes, and the Woolstans, where one day Geordy had been startled to find Mrs. and Miss Martin, but had behaved very well according to her notion—that is, very coolly and distantly—but could not help being astonished to find Sara Martin so handsome and sensible a girl, how very amiable the mother was,



... he now? — "Ah, G
opinion, I see; that they
charming, most loveable peo

Georgina stared. "Why
and there she stopped and lo

"What now, Geordy? W
Charles, flushing still more.

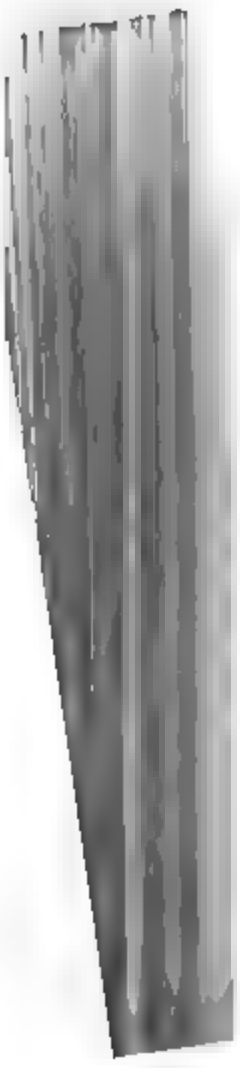
"Why," said Georgina, "
are in love."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ch
on his heel, "what stuff you ta

"But what a horrid tangle th
said Georgina, "if you rea
love with Sara Martin. Oh,
worse than that affair of Ron
Georgina laughed, and yet
serious and curious.

and herds grazed and increased, wool was clipped and sold well. The country had recovered from the effects of the bush fire. Barks and Purdy still continued at the diggings; they had bought a cart and horse of their own, and had deposited in Mr. Fitzpatrick's hands some hundreds of pounds that they had gained. Still they thought they would have a further campaign at the gold-fields, for there came fresh news and fresh rushes, and they were ever on the edge of a new grand chance. One great piece of good luck, and they would give over; but still the chance did not come, and they went on.

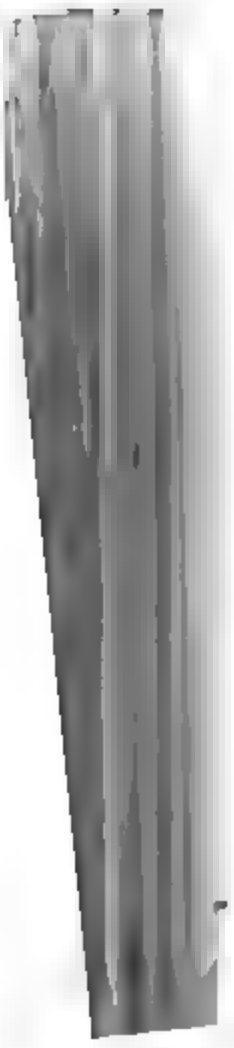
Meantime Tallangetta flourished without them. Mr. Fitzpatrick followed his kangaroo hounds, and shot his emus, his wild turkeys, and his bronze-wings; and Charles joined him, and many another man, for Tallangetta was become known far and wide. It was pleasant riding over to the Poncefords, and the Metcalfes, and the Woolstans, and the Quarriers; and Tallangetta often saw them altogether under its roof, and there was no lack of topics, music, and social pleasure. Ever and anon dropped in the squatter going up or down the country; the commissioner riding from one digging to another, for there was now a great rumour of wonders doing at the Ovens, and Tallangetta lay not far out of the track from



From the windows of T
stream traversing the gr
Men on foot, with pack, a
dogs; men on horseback,
and women and children
plunging, tearing along, ami
huge drays, hugely piled
swaying along, drawn by
bullocks, and attended by hu
huge hats, and smoking faces,
and thundered like volleys
and an eternal din of oaths,
Men and women in garbs o
and colours; and on they c
skurry, noisy; guns firing
howling, horses neighing, l
pandemonium broke loose.
Bendi

their shoulders bearing at each end a ponderous burden. On they go, trot, trot, with a short mincing pace, and bending poles. There runs a team of a dozen men harnessed by ropes to a cart loaded with bundles and tools; and away they fly forward, and are gone. And there creeps along a Frenchman with a big black beard, wheeling in a barrow before him one big box and one great red umbrella.

Never did Aunt Judith and the ladies of Tallangetta see or dream of such a sight, tearing, steering, winding, and streaming on and on, and without end, up that lately flowering valley, now flowering no longer; for that strange multitude burst through the sea of golden flowers, tread it down mercilessly, recklessly, drag their carts, gallop their horses, tramp in their ever coming hundreds and thousands over it. There they halt; and loud comes the thunder and the crash of falling trees; out burst fires here, there, near, far, all along the creek side, and the wood side; kettles are boiling, frying-pans hissing, dogs barking, horses and bullocks turned loose to graze, and far as the eye can see rise smokes and gleam fires; and on and on comes, comes, comes, the never-ending train of white-tilted carts, and high-piled wagons, and hurrying foot people, and galloping riders in blue and flaming scarlet, and in



"What is it? What in
exclaims Aunt Judith and th
"It is a rush," says Charle
"A rush! And what is
diggerdom rushing to?" asks
"They are rushing to the
Ovens," replies Charles. "A
you, they will want milk, butt
vegetables, fruit — everything."
"Oh, gracious me!" cried A
"What, will they eat us up?
like a flight of locusts? Will
Oh, Heaven defend us! What
"No, trust them!" said Ch
come up here, they are in too g
it is life and death with them
promise: but they will want
huts below — meat, milk —

Beware of the garden, Abner! beware of the barley paddocks, Abner! or they will soon clear off cherry and peach, melon and grape, half ripe. They will turn their horses into the corn, and it will be all trodden down before you can say Jack Robinson!"

And whilst speaking, away he ran down the hill-side, and away went Mr. Fitzpatrick, and the cook after him, all the ladies crying, "Oh, take care! take care, or they 'll kill you!"

And truly there was a Babel, and a bustle, and a crowding, and a noise, as they reached the huts. There were a hundred voices asking for milk, mutton, eggs, anything, and offering handfuls of money and native gold. Any price for the first serve. David Rannock, with his cool Scotch blood, was promising them everything if they would only give time — it was impossible to give them everything at once. "Time! nonsense, man! we have no time. Where's your beef—your pickled beef—your corned beef—your mutton?" "We have none killed," shouted David; and a score of rough voices shouted to him back; whilst the speakers peered into his face till nose touched nose. "Bring your sheep here; we 'll kill 'em for you."

Fowls were knocked down with sticks, and not a

feathered creature would have been left, but they escaped — ducks and geese into the lake, and hens into the hen-lofts. Abner and Peggy were cutting cabbage at three and five shillings a piece, and tearing up onions, and carrots, and potatoes, at two shillings a handful, till the perspiration streamed from their faces; and all the women and children were helping to hand something, or helping to wonder. What a stir! what a confusion! what a hubbub!

"Hold! hold!" cried the commanding voice of Mr. Fitzpatrick; "what do you want, my friends, here?"

"Want!" exclaimed eager, hairy fellows, from the backs of lean horses, or on their own long legs, "we want everything, and have no time for talk."

"Well, have patience! and we'll do what we can for you."

"Patience! the devil! we've no time for patience! Have you any meat, old fellow?"

"Plenty," said a strong confident voice, close at Mr. Fitzpatrick's ear. It was a voice like music to him.

"Barks, my friend, are you there? — and Purdy? You are just the men we want — you can help us — you know these men."

"Yes, yes! we know them! — we know you,

mates! Keep order—do no mischief—all are friends here; and now follow us; we must have some sheep up. Come along!"

A troop of men and boys rushed after them, and in ten minutes some sheep from a flock near were caught and killed and cut up, warm as they were, and sold at fabulous prices; and away went horsemen, with a smoking quarter of mutton each before them; and away went pedestrians, with *their* smoking quarters, and with sacks of potatoes, turnips, cabbages, and pumpkins. Never was such a fair!—on they came, and came; and so long as daylight lasted there was no rest for man, woman, or child; all were busy serving, taking money, serving again—even to Mr. Fitzpatrick, and to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and Aunt Judith, and Georgina, for they had followed down, and were seen pulling turnips, carrots, parsnips, cutting cabbages, and dealing out melons and pumpkins. So soon as it was dark, and the rushing tribe of living, hungry, impatient creatures paused, all sat down in David Rannock's, and sought some refreshment for themselves. They were tired out, worn down, famishing; and not a loaf or a drop of milk was left in the place. But Charles and Barks, and some of the younger people, hurried up to the house, where there was still plenty, and brought

bread and meat, and tea and butter; and there was a busy meal, and then a council.

What was to be done? "The stream," Barks and Purdy said, "would continue for days, weeks; for the rumour was wonderful, and would draw half the old diggings. If the field lasted, there would be a great traffic always on this road; and there must be a supply of all necessaries. There must be a capacious butcher's shop and a store. Yes! there must be a store of groceries, and flour, and cheese, and bread. There was a fortune to be made out of it. But how long would the goods hold out? They must calculate, and charge accordingly. They must keep a supply for themselves too. As to meat, they could supply any quantity of that. There were plenty of sheep and bullocks too on the run; and if they could not supply enough of themselves, they had plenty of flocks on their neighbour's runs at command."

Barks and Purdy, who had set out to go to the Ovens, stayed, at the earnest request of Mr. Fitzpatrick. They agreed to conduct the supply of meat. David Rannock sent off in the night a message to order up abundant supplies of flour, and teas, and sugars, and other groceries, from Melbourne. There was a stock at the huts already to last for a fortnight

— flour at 15*l.* the bag. Abner, with the help of the women, thought he could deal out as many vegetables each day as he could spare; and luckily the garden was of an enormous size — it was at least five acres; and when he had sold a certain quantity, he meant to guard the rest for the family's use, like a griffin of the Arimaspian desert.

For days the rush and crush continued, and not a moment had any one to spare. It was a scene of hurry, hurry, deal out stuff, take in money. In about ten days the main fury of the rush was over, but there remained a brave trade, chiefly in meat, milk, and groceries, which kept all the men at work, and occupied Charles and his father in directing and providing.

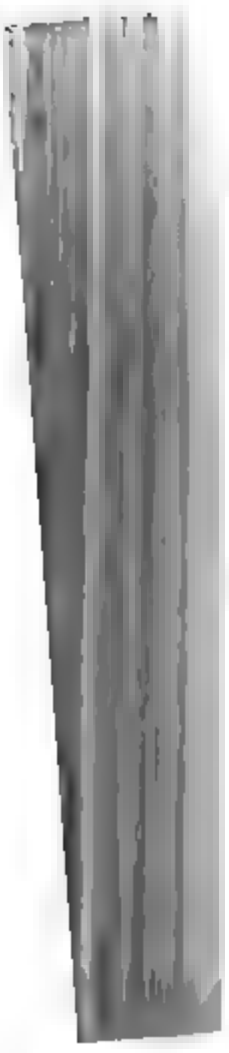
It was a new and wholly unexpected scene of life, and of profit too, opened. It was a gold mine of no trivial yield, and the Tallangetta family laughed at the idea of being thus converted *al improviso* into traders, hucksters, chapmen, and dealers! Who shall say what a man shall become in a new colony, and in a new gold colony in particular?

But besides the new field of activity and profit, this change brought a new and wonderful accession of company. There were batches of commissioners, in demi-military uniform, hastening off to the new

gold-field: young men of gentlemanly character and education — some: snobbish, and empty, and vain — many. There were doctors and lawyers, storekeepers and mechaneers, as keenly hurrying to the new scene of action. There were police, mounted and on foot: a bran new escort, with mounted troopers in blue uniform, scouring along, guarding their light cart to bring down the gold; and there was the Governor himself, with a troop of officers, flying rather than riding, to take a survey of the new Ophir. All these drew up at the huts, or the house, as naturally as ducks swim or spaniels take to the water. The gentlemen instinctively took their way to the house on the hill, and the trading and more work-a-day people gave David Rannock their company. There were dinners, and luncheons, and teas, and suppers to provide, for all came hungry as hunters: their horses wanted no care, they were turned at once into the paddocks around to care for themselves: but there wanted shake-downs at night often for a score or two; and then came Charles's barracks, as he called it, into request; and many a comical bed there was constructed both at the huts and the house. A rug to roll themselves in sufficed the multitude, and whole floors were seen strewn with immortal creatures, who had souls to save, and lay in

most Christian humility on floors and benches, and snored in many a wild tune, though they were commissioners in charge of Her Majesty's gold-fields. Many were the talks over night, amongst pipes and rum, and comic were the shifts in the mornings to find wash-basins and towels for the thickly-strewn and fast upstarting guests, who absorbed huge quantities of tea out of all sorts of cups and panikins, and cleared huge dishes of chops and steaks, and then mounted and away, paying nothing but "thanks! and we'll call as we come back!"

A busy, expensive, profitable, and most amusing place was this Tallangetta become, by lying so on the direct line of travel to the new diggings, and sometimes odd and rather startling incidents took place. Sometimes, half a dozen hairy and strangely vested fellows, looking amazingly bushrangerish, would stroll up to the house when not a soul but the ladies was there, and coolly seat themselves in the kitchen, call for meat and drink, draw out their pipes, make a very free survey of the house, and then stalk on. Suddenly, as Georgina was sitting one warm day at an open window, at her needle, a couple of huge-bearded faces presented themselves close to her own, and a familiar "Well, mate, is there such a thing as lemonade or gingerade on the



– Hang the door," said th
is the shortest way;" and
the window-sill, they leape
the drawing-room, followed
grim white bulldog, and thr
rich silken sofa, in their cl
clothes, the dog jumping up a
between them, they greatly
elastic seat, and declared it pri

"Well," said they, withou
frightened face, "this is somet
"Gad, mate," added one, stroki
"I 'll turn squatter myself, or
a glass they have!" pointing
the mantel-piece. "That 's big
chief commissioner to see him
shave without cutting there, a
where 's the gingerade ——

patrick to come here." Aunt Judith's astonishment was not trifling when she entered, and saw Georgina sitting gravely at her needle, and two great, rough, hairy fellows, in clay-coloured and very light garbs, stretching their legs at full length on the sofa, one from the head, and the other from the foot, their dusty bulldog asleep between their legs, and very composedly smoking their pipes, which they had produced and lit, throwing their burning matches on the carpet, and putting down one leg and treading on them. But Aunt Judith had the tact to take the thing easily, and was no little amused by the free conversation of the men, whom she soon saw had no harm in them, though each had his gun, his revolver, and a butcher's knife stuck in a leathern case at his waist behind. Having made a hearty meal, they went away, declaring that they could not have been better treated in the best inn in Melbourne. "And there 's that for a keepsake," said one, pulling out a nugget of at least one ounce weight, and giving it to Georgina. "Nay then," said the other, "here 's one too for the mother," giving to Aunt Judith one still larger; and, with a "Good bye, mother; good bye, pretty Miss," they nodded gravely, puffed complacently, and smoked serenely away down the slope.

Scarcely were they out of hearing, before Aunt Judith went into fits of laughter, and declared that she would have iron bars put to all the lower windows, and chains to the doors, or she should never dare to stay in the house without the gentlemen, but should follow them about wherever they went, like a sheep. Such incidents, however, were of rare occurrence; and they soon came to amuse themselves with them without fear, for they never received any harm from any one who visited them.

Soon the escort and the chief government traffic took their direct way up and down, to and from Melbourne, and the traffic of the diggers that way became less, and more steady; and by placing a board on a pole, at the entrance of the plain below, with a hand painted, pointing along the valley, with the words, "TO THE STATION AND STORE," the visitors at the house were more occasional and select. When all had fallen into a steady routine again, and Mr. Fitzpatrick had made over the store, and the supply of the travelling diggers to Mr. Rannock and Barks and Purdy, wishing to make a good thing for them, Charles once more made his excursions, sometimes with Georgina, sometimes without, to Corballa and Moolap. Flavel, instead of coming, as proposed, immediately, had deferred his visit to make

a tour through Tasmania and Adelaide, and Charles beginning to lack excitement, was vexed to find that Mr. Farbrother was gone on one of his naturalist tramps into New South Wales, and Mr. Peter Martin had gone with him, being anxious to visit Mount Wingen, the volcano. For a moment Charles felt really chagrined at that news; for he had told Mr. Farbrother that he should of all things like to join him on such a ramble, and he had promised that he should; but then he reflected that he had been over head and ears in the rush, and that if Mr. Martin had a desire to go, he could not have been of the party.

Charles was far from being in a happy mood. He had never forgotten the fresh, sensible, attractive face and buoyant form of Sara Martin, and meeting her repeatedly at the Woolstans, he had grown more and more fascinated by her. There was such a clear, healthy beauty, there was such a clear transparence of mind and nature in her, mingled with a pleasant gravity, which, as you became on familiar terms, developed so much easy affability and gaiety of heart, as won irresistibly on Charles. Sara Martin had all the strong sense of her father, with something of his frank, decided manner, but with an absence of vanity or assumption that was extremely charming.

She was highly educated, having been her father's pupil; and not only played on the piano with great skill, but sung with a sweetness and a feeling very rare. Being extremely fond of horseback, Charles accompanied her on long rides through the forest, and found himself insensibly reluctant to leave the place where she was. In fact, Charles was irrecoverably lost. He felt how it stood with him, and he looked with consternation on what stood before him. He had pledged himself to his father to have nothing to do with Mr. Martin, and here he was, gone beyond recall, in love with his daughter. What should he do? He thought on what Georgina had said, when she suddenly seemed to divine his feelings. He rode home, was restless, could settle to nothing, and on the very next time of Sara Martin being at Corballa, found himself there, looking on her bright, clever, spiritual face, listening to her grave talk, so singularly lit up with cheerfulness and gleams of merriment as with sunshine, standing over her at the piano, riding by her side; and ever again and again came the stinging thought, what was to be the end of it?

But there can be only one end with young people in such a predicament; Charles soon convinced himself that all must come right. This misunderstanding of the families, which, by the bye, was all on the

side of his own family, must come to an end. Mr. Martin himself said it would end soon. Charles resolved, at all events, to take the necessary plunge, and ascertain his fate with Miss Martin, and leave all the rest to Providence. Alas! poor Charles found that the fair object of his admiration had more firmness than himself. When he made known his sentiments, Sara Martin suddenly flushed all over like the red rose, but as suddenly assumed the colour of the white rose. She became pale, and trembled excessively; tears started to her eyes, and still allowing her hand to remain in Charles's, as he had taken it, said: "Mr. Fitzpatrick, I will be candid with you. Were all straight and amicable between our families, I should to-day be the happiest of women; but now I am far, far from that. You know how matters stand as well as I do. Your father would be furious at the idea of such a proposal on your part; my father would never consent that I should listen a moment to it under present circumstances. We must part instantly," and here her tears fell faster, and the hand trembled more violently. "We have been foolish, I now perceive, foolishly happy; but we must be firm and honourable. Neither your father nor mine shall blush for us, cousin Charles?" and she looked such

an inquiry at the young man, as drove him to distraction.

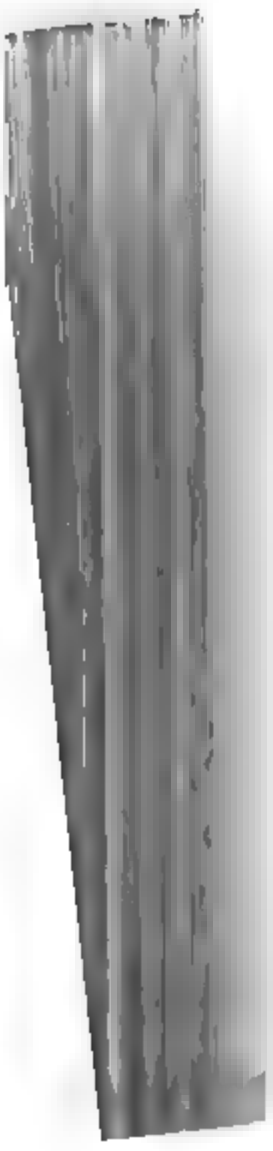
Charles strove vehemently, said, did everything that an ardent lover could do to convince Miss Martin that all would be right soon; but the young lady said firmly, "When it is so we may talk of it; till then we ought not, and we must not. Good bye, dear cousin; let us part at once; we are not kind to our parents, we are not true to ourselves here any longer."

"But promise me, dear Sara, promise me," said Charles, "that until all comes right you will wait, you will consider us pledged to each other for that time."

"No, no! not a word more, Charles!" exclaimed Miss Martin; "that would be to break your pledge to your father while pretending to keep it. I will give no promise, make no engagement; we will stand as free, as clear, as true to ourselves and to our parents, as the will if not the ——" Charles expected she would add, "the heart can make us;" but with an effort she suddenly drew her hand from Charles's, and, fresh tears gushing over her cheek, disappeared into her own room.

Charles saw no more of her that evening, and the next morning at breakfast he learned to his astonishment, that she had ridden home by herself. In vain

from that time he sought to meet her at Moolap or at Corballa; she never came there. In vain he wrote to her; she only replied — "Remember what I said, and do not write to me, for I cannot answer." That was all. Charles felt that she was right, and he honoured her for it; but that did not make him at his ease. He believed she loved him, but he longed to know it positively. When might these hateful family affairs clear themselves up? What might not happen with a beautiful and fascinating woman like Sara Martin in a colony where ladies were not plentiful, and such ladies *rarissimæ*? He was restless, had no taste for anything, and rode about rather to distract his thoughts than to find any enjoyment. Suddenly he heard of Mr. Martin's return home, and often he rode out to Corballa and Moolap in the hope of finding him. "What a good neighbour Charles Fitzpatrick is become," said the Woolstans and the Metcalfes. They felt much flattered, but they thought he did not look so well as he had done. They doubted the climate would not suit him. What a pity! They observed that he did not enter with the same unaffected relish into the sports and the pursuits of bush life. That was a proof that he was not quite well. They advised him to go for awhile to Van Diemen's Land, or to New Zealand. He



the beauty of Sydney, of
Darling and Liverpool, of t
and the tropical wonders of

"But, bless me! Charley
you?" he said, suddenly stop
thus turning the eyes of D:
suddenly upon him. "Why
are getting thin, you have lo
suddenly flushed a rich red.
is a hectic flush; my dear fel

"Oh! nothing! nothing
"perhaps I have been a little
rush and the hot weather."

"But," continued Mr. Mart
ness to be overdone, a young fe
like it a bit. It can't be this c
said he, addressing Dr. Wools

"Perhaps it may," said the
a pretty shrewd

thing. I will go with you, Charles;—oh no! I forgot, I can't do that, I wish I could; but you must go alone."

Charles said he would think of it; but as soon as he could get Mr. Martin alone, he opened his heart to him fully, and entreated his sanction and kind interest in the matter.

"Bless me," said Mr. Martin, looking all astonishment. "That 's it, is it? Who could have dreamed of that, now! Why, my dear fellow," he continued, snatching Charles's hand; "if there were one youngster on the face of the earth that I would choose for Sara, it would be you. But then — confound all this nonsense! there can 't be a word said about it; Sara is quite right. No! no! we must be all fair above board, no underhand work. No! no! it won't do. We must let things take their course, trust in Providence, and believe all will come right."

"But if we could have an understanding; I don't say intercourse or correspondence," said Charles; "I don't ask for that, but only an understood certainty."

"Ah! the deuce! but that, you see, is everything!" said Mr. Martin. "Then we are just cheating your father, and saying nothing about it, that is all. No, no; I won't say a word, yes or no. Sara is quite right. Not a word for the world. It shall never be added

to the charges against Mr. Peter Martin, that he secretly encouraged Sir Thomas's son, in spite of his prohibition of such an acquaintance. Don't you see, my dear Charles? don't you see? Well, you must go off somewhere, and work like a very Cyclop. Ay, that's it; that's the thing; and, let me see,—why there's Farbrother going right away up to the north east, into New England, you 'd better go with him."

Charles listened to that, and Mr. Martin promised to settle all about the matter, and, shaking Charles's hand very affectionately, rode off—full canter for Corballa.

If people in love were reasonable, Charles might have made himself quite at ease. As far as both father and daughter were concerned, there was everything to assure him; he had a strong place in both of their hearts; but then lovers are not reasonable, and the long standing enmity between the families lay like a black cloud on the young man's spirit. But at home, where his faded looks and unsettled state were also seen, the scheme of his trip with Mr. Farbrother was highly approved, though no one there knew where it originated; and in a few months he was off, with his rifle, his dog Club, his brown cob, his valise containing a simple change of linen, and his calico sheet,

which formed at any moment a rain-proof tent, folded and strapped behind him.

We shall not follow him on this trip, which was what he called glorious, and lasted six months, living in the forests and the mountains, sleeping under the fragrant boughs of the forest, and in constant enjoyment of new scenes, and the pursuit of new objects of natural history. He came back refreshed and renewed: the same beloved idea was at the bottom of his soul; it reigned there strongly but resignedly. Continually they were making new acquaintances at solitary stations, and found squatters who delighted to go off with them for weeks through the woods and hills. Many a quaint, strange scene they saw, many a strange wild story they heard, which would enrich for years Charles's memory, and the fireside stories of home, on his return. Amid the Snowy Mountains, on their regaining the colony of Victoria, they sojourned at a beautiful place called Mount Tracey, and hunted wild bulls with a fine young squatter of the name of Widdrington, whose story, which was as follows, greatly interested them.

CHAP. XV.

THE GOLD-HUNTERS.

Whither away, young man;
Whither away?

To the land where gold doth grow,
There with sack and pack we go,
  Where men revel, smoke, and fight;
Where they swelter in the sun,
Where they sleep, their delving done,
  On bags of gold. Good-night.

On the 10th of June, 1852, a great sorrow had fallen on two families in the north. These two families lived in Coquet Dale, on the coast of Northumberland. Their ancestors had borne great names in the days of feudal strife. They were united by many an old tradition, which had maintained a kindly friendship long after the martial glories of their race had departed. They now occupied a still and unobtrusive position in their native country, and one of them had descended to the simple

rank of a yeoman. Farmer Widdrington could trace his descent from the hero who had fought so stoutly on his stumps after his legs had been smitten off at Chevy-Chase. He now saw the once fair estates of his particular branch of the family reduced to 150 acres on a bare and chilly upland, which, from the free play of the elements about it, had acquired for his humble homestead the significant name of Windy-Haugh. From this elevated spot, he could look down, at a distance on the stately but ruined towers of Warkworth, from whose portals his ancestors had often borne proudly the banner of the Percy against the bands of Douglas. Still beyond lay the wild ocean, and just below him, snugly embowered in its gardens and orchards, the imposing antique residence of Reginald Mowbray, his very good neighbour and friend.

The two families living thus near to each other, and somewhat distant from others, the intercourse between them, based on long family alliance, had been all the more uninterrupted, simple, and cordial. Mr. Mowbray, very much the richer man of the two, was of a quiet and very retiring disposition, devoted to the reading of border antiquities and to fly-fishing. Since the death of his wife, some years previously, he had grown more confirmed in his avoidance of

general society. He had only one child, a daughter, Ellen Mowbray, on whose education he had bestowed much care and expense, and she was now his almost constant companion and solace.

His great enjoyment, next to ranging the wild moorlands through which the Coquet runs from near Carter Fell to the sea, was and had been for twenty years at least, daily, when at home, to walk slowly up the hill to neighbour Widdrington's, with his newspaper in his pocket, and have a comfortable chat with the hearty old couple who lived there. He was accustomed to drop in at the close of the day, when the farmer's labours were ended, and they had drawn round the fire. Here he communicated any news that the paper contained, and they discussed the state and prospects of the country.

Matthew Widdrington—a strong, hale man, of a clear, hard, practical head, who took a shrewd, common-sense view of things—was never in danger of being led away by his imagination, which betrayed no evidence of its existence except when awakened by some tradition of the past, by wild border legends, such as the Ghostly Bridal of Featherstonhalgh, or the dirge of a Lykewake, or a story of a battle-field, so many of which lay around them in which their forefathers had stood together. Mrs. Widdrington

was one of those women whose sound sense and warm motherly hearts make themselves strongly felt wherever they exist, even in the humblest dwellings. The squire had perfect reliance on her judgment and true feeling; and he never concluded the least affair of business without having well discussed it during the evening conclave at Windy-Haugh. Mrs. Widdrington had been the intimate, long-years' friend of his late wife, and showed a mother's interest in Ellen. There were no days so happy as when the bright face and merry voice of Ellen Mowbray enlivened the little farm-house.

The Widdringtons had two sons; the eldest, Andrew, a sober, plain, young man, whose ideas never overran the farm on which they lived, and on which he was an indefatigable plodder; the younger, George, a quick, ardent, and impetuous character. He had an especial passion for everything belonging to country life, and may be said to owe this, in a great degree to Mr. Mowbray. As a lad, he had often engaged him to carry his fishing-basket and landing-net on his angling expeditions up the Coquet; the prince of Northumbrian piscatory streams. By this means he seemed to have become indispensable on such occasions to the old gentleman. His active character; his readiness to run on all occasions, to

assist in all difficulties, and his fondness for the sport, had completely won the old gentleman's heart. Many a delightful summer's day they spent together amongst the fells and moors of that picturesque and singularly solitary region; by Brinkburn Priory; the quaint, grey, old village of Rothbury; amongst the heathery Simonside Hills; by the ruins of Harbottle, and its lonely, gloomy tarn, which no traveller ever passed without awe; and away past the roaring chasm of the Linn Brig, up to its wild source in the perfectly silent hills. On many of these occasions Ellen Mowbray as a little girl had accompanied them, and the remembrance of the deeply brooding silence of the summer's day by the Halystane Well, or in the heathery wastes of Barra Burn, only broken by the wild cry of the curlew, the rushing sound of the upspringing black game, or the sight of the stately heron watching by the stream for its prey, came frequently across her in the hours of town study. Was it any wonder if the image of their boy-companion, George Widdrington, came also amongst all these pleasant pictures not the less pleasantly? Especially as at later holiday times they had rambled together through all the neighbouring haunts of the dale, and were familiar with all its traditions. George could repeat by heart the whole of the ballad of the

Hermit of Warkworth, and often, as children, had they spent whole afternoons in its ruined chapel and little enclosure, playing at the young banished lord and the fair Emily Neville; whose visit to the hermit has charmed the youthful imaginations of thousands beside themselves.

So much had George Widdrington won the regard of Mr. Mowbray, that he had volunteered the cost of an education for him far beyond the means and aspirations of his own parents; and had augmented his kindness by having him articled to an eminent solicitor in Newcastle.

As George spent his brief snatches of holiday at home, he continued to pass a good portion of these bright days at Kidland Grange, and to manifest all his ancient predilection for his fair playfellow. As they both grew — the one into a tall handsome, and active young man; the other into one of the most graceful and beautiful maidens that ever bloomed on the Border—the same unclouded frankness of intercourse still prevailed, as if they were indeed brother and sister. Worldly-wise people saw it, and asked what the wealthy Mr. Mowbray meant by giving this unobstructed opportunity to the son of the poor farmer Widdrington, to engross the affections of a daughter whose beauty and fortune might claim for

her the noblest hand in the county? Mr. Mowbray saw it just as clearly as they did, and felt that he would rather call his favourite George Widdrington his son-in-law, than any man he knew or expected to know.

And it was, no doubt, with this settled purpose in his mind, that, on George completing the term for which he was articled, he took a wider view for him, and one more suitable to the future husband of Ellen. He sent him to London, and entered him at Lincoln's Inn, as a student for the bar. He was the more readily induced to do this from the zealous praises of his old master, who declared that his talents were of too high an order to be wasted in the obscurity of an attorney's office, and would certainly do honour to his native county if introduced to a nobler field of exercise.

George had not only eaten his commons; but had studied hard under an eminent counsel for more than two years. When he paid his annual autumnal visit, he was observed to be as gay and agreeable as ever, and wonderfully improved by the more extended area of society, and the opportunities for amassing knowledge, both of books and life, which he had enjoyed. A finer or more intelligent young man, it was declared, even by the most aristocratic people of the neighbour-

hood, was not to be found in the north. This was all very gratifying both to Mr. Mowbray and to his daughter. The union of the families, so long allied in friendship, was now considered a settled thing. All around them looked bright and calm.

Yet there sprung up, slightly at first, a spirit of uneasiness. During the last visit of George, Ellen thought she perceived a failing of George's attachment; not to her, but to the ancient usages and faith of their ancient church. There was a tone in his observations when she ventured to question him on the subject, which jarred painfully, though confusedly on her feelings, and the further she pressed the subject, the more her anxiety and alarm grew. She, as her family had ever been, and as her father was now, was most devotedly and conscientiously attached to the established faith. Without any illiberal prejudice—with a more ample and generous spirit of toleration than prevailed around her—she was yet terrified at the bare idea of the man, to whom she had given her heart and soul in the glow of the tenderest affection and with whom she contemplated spending her life, being infected with sceptical ideas. But George in London had fallen in with a knot of very highly learned and brilliant men, who had adopted many of the rationalistic tenets of Strauss and Paulus; and

while they accepted the doctines of Christianity as the corpus of a sublime and philanthropic philosophy, a philosophy essential to the progress of civilisation, rejected the miraculous history of the Bible as a congeries of myths.

Pressed by Ellen with an uneasy importunity on the subject, George did not hesitate to open all his views to her, trusting to her liberal education, and her undoubted affection for him, for at least a patient tolerance of his conscientious belief. But he had not calculated truly on the effect which such a revolution must have upon her deeply-rooted sentiments, and on the old, hereditary faith of her family. She shrunk in consternation from the divided faith which the future seemed to menace, instead of the spiritual as well as affectionate union which she had relied upon. She saw with equal consternation the terror and anger, and unhappiness which the knowledge of such a dread discovery would inevitably produce, both in her father's mind and in those of George's own parents. They were all of the most strictly orthodox and unswerving faith in the historic truth of their religion, and in the sacred authority of the tenets of their own church.

After George's return to London, the serious and even sad air which nothing could prevent falling over

the features of Ellen, soon excited the anxiety of both her father and of the Widdringtons; to whom the same perceptions and feelings became as quickly and invariably common as if communicated by a mesmeric sympathy. Inquiries, wonders, and letters followed with so much activity, that the fatal secret could not long remain one. The old people on both sides were struck dumb with dismay. Old Mr. Mowbray sent for George down, and every means which parental affection and authority could desire to drive this heresy from his mind were exerted, but in vain. All that George pleaded for was that they should give him time to reconsider his opinions, and to satisfy himself further on what concerned himself especially. But this was what Mr. Mowbray could form no conception of. He was so hereditarily rooted in his own religious faith, that he could not conceive of any one entertaining a doubt on any part of it, without a feeling of indignation and horror. He, therefore, reminded George of all he had done, and all he proposed to do, and expressed his deep chagrin to find that it had been all wasted on a young man who had displayed such weakness. He concluded by declaring that until George abandoned his absurd and wicked fancies, he should withhold his friendship and assistance.

George Widdrington issued from the old familiar

doors of the Grange in a state of indescribable misery. Ruin or a contemptible hypocrisy were before him. We shall not attempt to describe the horrors of the night which succeeded this cruel interview. When he entered his own home, his parents and brother sat in a dejected silence. No word was said, and he went up to his room, and flung himself in a stupor of grief on his bed. But with the rising sun he stood on the door-stone of his native cottage, with a small valise in his hand, and with the air of a traveller. It was a splendid morning. The dew lay thick on the grass, glittering in the sun like myriads of diamonds, but everything except the birds was profoundly still. The landscape itself, and the dwellings of men in it, yet seemed to sleep. The house slept, as it were, with all its inhabitants, for it was an hour when even the early dwellers in the country were not yet astir.

As the young man stood there for a moment, years of bright summers passed over his heart. All that was happy, and beautiful, and tender, came up as from a sacred fountain in his soul. The spirit of the past with all its heavenly sweetness and affection, well nigh conquered him. He cast one quick look into the future, where all his household gods lay shattered around him, and the dreary solitude of it appalled him. He paused—almost yielded; but

some new idea shot across him, and he bounded down the slope and disappeared, pursued by the trenchant thought that perhaps he should never see the beloved ones he thus left any more.

We shall not dwell on the gloomy period of affliction to all parties which followed. George reflected in consternation and deepest wretchedness in his chambers, on his position and prospects. His brilliant hopes were suddenly destroyed. To pursue his legal career was impossible. True, he could procure an engagement in a lawyer's office, but his proud spirit revolted at the retrograde movement; and in the depth of his dejection, a new vision suddenly presented itself. The wonderful tidings of the gold-fields of Australia had just burst on the public. He would go.

He acted instantly on the impulse. There was a pleasure in retiring for a while from the domestic storm, in action and change of scene. He sold his books and his few effects, and found himself master of twenty pounds. His finances dictated his position, and though inwardly shrinking from it, he dared it. He took an intermediate passage, hoping that he should meet at the distant port no one who knew him. Once more he wrote letters to his parents and to Ellen, overflowing with all the tenderness that he

felt, protesting the pain which he felt, in the pain which he knew that he must have given. Before he set sail, he received answers equally full of sorrow and affection. Ellen, in the tone of her old attachment, approved of his resolution to make this voyage, and most tenderly united in his hope that its result might be every way auspicious. There was balm in this, though he knew the tendency of the hope expressed.

The ship was on its way, and George Widdrington found himself in a new world, and among strange associates. There were about two hundred passengers in the second class, and when he went below to his berth, he stood confounded at the scene before him. However he might have resolved to suppress his feelings, he could not see his quarters for the next three or four months without a feeling of disgust and repulsion.

In a long apartment, divided off into small stalls, as it were in a market—stalls of some seven feet long by three or four feet wide, and in which there was just room for a half-yard wide mattress—he made one of a rude crowd with whom he had no sympathy, nor for the language and spirit of many of them even toleration. The very lowest purlieus of Whitechapel and Ratcliffe Highway seemed to have furnished a liberal quota of the throng; and the squalling of chil-

dren and messes of cooking were to him something frightful.

The first few days were rather stormy. Luckily George was well, and could escape to the deck. As he emerged from the hatchway, however, one of his fondest hopes was at once dissipated. He was met with an exclamation of surprise by an old acquaintance. It was Adam Swinburne, who had passed his apprenticeship as a surgeon in Newcastle, and was here as the ship's doctor.

"George Widdrington! and below there! What in the name of all wonders is the meaning of this?" was the young man's exclamation. George took him by the arm, and leading him forward, explained so much of the mystery as that he had suddenly resolved on a trip to the gold-fields, and as it, of course, had at first been done without the knowledge of his friends, he had from necessity taken an intermediate berth. He begged Adam Swinburne to keep his confidence as to who he was, and hoped there were no other people from the north in the cabin.

"Not a soul!" said the warm-hearted Adam. "But, my good fellow, you cannot stay down there. It is impossible. I have a whole stern cabin, large and airy; that's your place, and a pleasant time we will have of it. Come along."

But George hung back. "It can't be, Adam. It would require forty pounds to advance me to the dignity of a cabin passenger; and see, I have just four," pulling out that number of sovereigns. "My mother sent me sixty pounds; but I guessed well enough where it came from, and I sent it back with my soul's thanks."

"That's all right," said Adam Swinburne, "but now hear. I shall have half-a-sovereign for every passenger on arrival. There are about two hundred. I'll settle all that, and we'll balance out of the first nuggett."

"But if we are drowned," said George, smiling, "who 's to pay for me then?"

"Why, let the proprietors come after us for it," said the kind-hearted youth, and laughing, lugged George away by the arm into the cabin.

"A patient already?" said the Captain, who was still sitting at the breakfast-table, with a number of ladies and gentlemen.

"No; a passenger," said Adam, still going on towards his cabin. George seemed to breathe again as he entered its airy space with its books and comfortable furniture, and recalled the filth, and stenches, and darkness below, with all its motley crowds. The business was soon arranged by Adam with the Cap-

tain. George's trunk was carried in, and a fresh bed added. George's intelligence and gentlemanly bearing soon made him a welcome inmate of the cuddy, and, as the voyage went on, he saw ample cause to congratulate himself on escaping from below. Two hundred people who had been accustomed on land to lives of daily labour, and to a degree of restraint from the presence of their employers, here thrown together for weeks and months, without an object but to drink of the plentiful stores of brandy which the ship afforded; to gamble, and sing, and fight, ere long presented a strange spectacle, in which the coarse rioted, and the meek and more refined shrunk aside and suffered. The pleasantest hour for contemplating this class was that after sunset, when, by common consent, they nearly all turned out, solaced themselves by singing, and on moonlight nights by a dance. Repetition, indeed, wore away even the charm of this, when "The Red Cross Knight," "The Pope," "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," and "Nora the Pride of Kildare," had been each chaunted their fiftieth time. Listening, one evening, as they leant against the poop-rail, George heard a lonely voice singing this homely ballad:—

"The lord said to his ladie,
As he mounted his horse,
Beware of Long Lonkin,
That lies in the moss.

"The lord said to his ladie,
As he rode away,
Beware of Long Lonkin
That lies in the clay.

"What care I for Lonkin,
Or any of his gang?
My doors are all shut
And barred with a stang.

"There were six little windows
And they were all shut,
But one little window,
And that was forgot.
And at that little window
Long Lonkin crept in."

"That's a Northumbrian!" exclaimed George.

"Ay, that it is," said Adam Swinburne. "It is no other than Tom Boyd, a shepherd of Todstead; and what do you think? That he is bound for the diggings? No; but to wander after a flock in the far bush."

"I wish him joy," said George.

"And he'll have it," said Adam, "for he has a lot of old books, that he has picked up at the stalls in London, with a lot of old ballads and legends in his head, and he actually revels in the idea of years of uninterrupted solitude. But, hark!" Tom Boyd

was still humming at the ballad, to the wonder of the town-growth of singers :

"Where's the ladies of the hall?
Says the Lonkin :
They 're up in the chambers,
Says Orange to him.

"How shall we get them down?
Says the Lonkin.
Prick the baby in the cradle,
Says Orange to him.

"Still did she prick it,
And "Bee-ba" she cried,
Come down, dearest mistress,
And still your own child.

"Oh! still my child, Orange,
Still him with a bell.
I can't still him, ladie,
Till you come down yersell," &c.

Tom's song was "caviare to the general;" but from that day, many a pleasant talk had George and Adam with the shepherd of Todstead, while the ship rushed through the waters of the tropics, and with the long summer days came long memories of mountain, wave, and stream in the Northern dales. Many a long, silent meditation had George Widdrington, as he glanced over the ship's side, where sad regrets and

deep mortifications mingled with fondest thoughts of those he left behind.

But now the ship was at land. The two friends stepped on shore in wonder. Where, seventeen years before, spread a green forest, peopled only by kangaroos and houseless natives, a great metropolis, and a countless throng of busy people met their eyes. Ships were crowded at the quays; piles of merchandise lay on the shore; and thousands of people—all eager in quest of gain—all hurrying to and fro, intent on their own thoughts and affairs, and on nought beside—waded along it knee-deep in mud, amid the din and confusion of drays, shouting drivers, mobs of horses, omnibuses and droshkies, bearing uncouth freights of hairy-faced men and flaunting women.

They hurried as fast as they could out of the town, having put into the care of a trusty Northumbrian merchant, letters for home, and a good remittance from Adam to his mother and sister. Still more extraordinary were the scenes on the road, if road that could be called, which was one ghastly reiteration of frightful bogs, ploughed yards-deep by incessant wheels; yawning gullies, and rocks and hills. The whole of this Tartarean track was thronged by huge drays, heavily laden, and dragged along by enormous teams of bullocks. Carts, drays, bullocks,

horses, lay in ruins and in death along the whole line, and still the wondrous stream of life and labour dragged, rolled, and tumbled along, amid a deafening din of oaths and curses, amid smashes and crashes; vehicles stuck fast in hopeless morasses, or dashed over ledges and precipitous gullies; people confounded by their difficulties, or brought to a stand by a tremendous break-down.

Still our travellers marched on in wonder, but in comparative ease, carrying only their rugs and damper at their backs, with the indispensable panikin, quart-pot, and revolver at their girdles. In about a week from leaving Melbourne, they found themselves at Sawpit Gully, only four miles short of Forest Creek. They had halted for the night, stretched their little blanket-tent over a cord fastened to two trees, kindled a fire in front, and were preparing for tea. Adam was arranging a couple of beefsteaks on two pointed sticks at the fire, and George was returning from the creek with the quart-pots full of water, when up came three men dressed as diggers, but armed with guns. One of them stayed with Adam at the fire, and the other two confronted George at some little distance. They presented their gun-muzzles simultaneously at his head, and said, "Quick, mates! Shell out!"

George took a glance at them, and set them down for two of the most strong-built and brutal vagabonds that he had ever beheld. They had bushes of black hair about their faces, and a genuine devil's expression. But they did not leave him much time for criticising them. They repeated the word "Quick!" and backed it by a fierce oath. George, who was not only courageous, but most adroitly expert in his movements, stooped as to set down his water, and rose with his revolver in his hand. With his left arm he knocked up the gun-muzzle of one of the villains, discharged one of his barrels at his head, and, with the rapidity of lightning, seized the gun of the other, and repeated his fire. This time the ball went through the fellow's hat, but not through his head, and he darted away through the bush. The other lay dead on the ground. George was in the act of sending a second bullet after the flying thief, when he beheld his friend Adam struggling on the ground, and a large fellow leaning on his chest, busily plundering him. George sprang towards him, when he rose and made off also. A shot was sent after him, and the fellow gave a leap, clapped his hand on his right shoulder, but continued his flight.

George Widdrington had no time to pursue him. For, looking at poor Adam, he beheld him stretched

on his back, his face and hands covered with blood, and no sign of life but a heavy groaning which escaped him.

"Adam! my dear fellow, Adam! can you speak?" cried George, frantically. There was no reply, but another deep groan. "Oh God! he is killed," cried George, "and what shall I do?" He sprung up, looked wildly around as for assistance; but, seeing no one on the road, he darted away to the quart-pots, and finding one still with its contents in it, he came, and kneeling down, washed away the blood from Adam's face.

It was a horrible sight. The nose appeared actually smashed. There was a deep wound on the cheek, and the whole face appeared bruised and crushed. The hands were bloody with a wound; the finger, on which his friend had worn a handsome ring, was stripped of skin: the wretch having evidently taken the finger in his mouth and torn off the ring with his teeth. The poor fellow's gold watch still lay by his side, having been left in the hurry of retreat.

While George was washing Adam's hands, and dropping tears over him like a child, the mangled man attempted to speak, but could not articulate a syllable; and George, gazing in distraction at him,

believed that his jaw was broken. At this instant his ear caught the rapid tramp of a horse in canter. He started up, and saw a man in a broad straw hat riding along the road. He gave a loud whoop, and was beginning to run towards the road, when the horseman turned his steed and came quickly at his call. A moment's glance at the scene, and he comprehended the whole of it.

"Bushrangers!" he exclaimed. "Is your friend alive?"

"I hope so," replied George, sadly; "but he is awfully hurt."

"Then, there is no time to be lost. I'll send you a surgeon; but there is an empty cart coming along. It is mine. Stop it, and keep it here."

Away the storekeeper — for such he was — galloped, and soon after the cart came in sight, and George stopped it. The man who was with it said, looking at the wounded surgeon, "Those infernal bushrangers again, I see. There is a ferocious set of them hereabouts. Have you given your mate a little brandy?"

Without stopping for a reply, he pulled a quart bottle from his pocket, poured a quantity into his panikin, and George raising poor Adam's head, the carter poured a little between his teeth. Adam, as if

the fiery liquor choked him, gave a short cough, opened his eyes, and again attempted to speak.

"What is it, dear Adam?" said George, stooping eagerly down to him. "What is it?"

"O, don't bother him yet!" said the man. "You see he's coming about by degrees. There's nothing like a nobbler after all, mate. Tak' a sup yourself." With that he poured out a full panikin and handed it to George. George took a draught, for he was ready to sink with excitement and exhaustion.

"Pugh, man, that's nothing, that's not a thimbleful." George shook his head. "Well, well, all's one," said the fellow, and draining the panikin, added, "And here comes the doctor—all right!"

The doctor leaped from the saddle, threw the reins to the carter, stooped and took the wounded man's wrist.

"All's well here," he said; "I suspect there is no injury but this ugly outward bruise; but that's bad enough. A little more water. Let us see." He felt the lacerated nose, traced the course of the jaw-bone, and said, "Can you open your mouth, my friend?" Adam opened his mouth, and spoke. "No harm to the jaw, but there is a heavy bruise behind the head."

The doctor drew out an instrument case, containing scissors and adhesive plaster, and with much care,

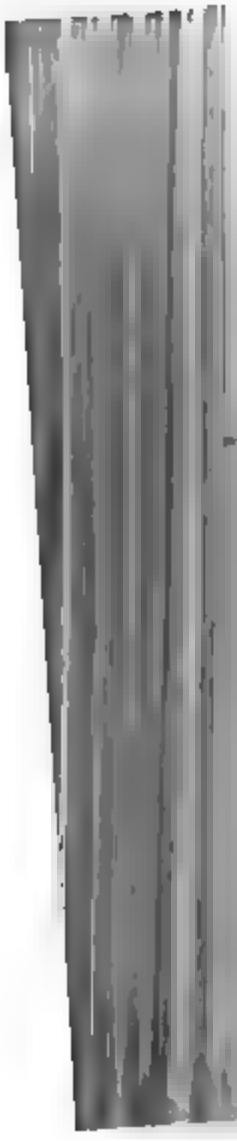
strapped up the wounds; the patient was laid on the cart, and a rug thrown over him, George riding with him to steady and support his head on the jolting road. The doctor rode forward, telling the carter to come to his tent.

Arrived at the doctor's tent, Adam was soon able to explain to them the way in which he had received his injuries. Having his last twenty pounds in his pocket, he was not inclined to part with it, and prepared for a struggle with his antagonists. But one of them, just before advancing towards George, felled him by a blow of a gun-stock on the back of the head. Recovering his senses, however, he found a fellow ransacking his pockets. Instantly grappling with him, both had a desperate struggle on the ground, till Adam getting uppermost, and beating the wretch well about the head, he suddenly seized his hand in his teeth and bit it furiously. This compelled Adam to let go, when they both sprang up together, and while Adam was in the act of drawing his revolver, the bushranger seizing his gun by the butt-end and by the barrel brought it down across his face with all his might. He fell senseless, and knew no more.

The following day the little blanket tent was set up near the doctor's, who continued to attend to the

patient with the kindest assiduity, and to send the friends supplies from his table to this little tent. It was two days before Adam was able to turn out, and then with his face so swollen and patched, that he declared, with something of his old humour, that he had forsworn looking-glasses for ever.

As soon as Adam could be left alone, George set out to try his luck at digging. The scene that met his eye as he drew near to the Forest Creek was strange enough. Twenty thousand people, at least, were all scuffling together like ants in an ant's nest, or tadpoles in a pool. The whole valley, through which ran the creek or brook, for several miles was in the act of being turned upside down. Close as the crowd could press upon each other so as to leave the prescribed number of feet to each party, they were digging, delving, throwing up earth, carrying away bags of it, supposed to contain the gold, to the creek, and there delivering it to other crowds who, at a long line of cradles, were in as great a bustle, throwing in the earth, rocking it to and fro under deluges of water from tin dippers. There was an incessant noise of rattling cradles, and shouting voices. Strange figures all yellow with clay, and disguised in bushy beards, and veils to keep off the flies, seemed too desperately busy to have time to



the sun flamed down on u
of gravel, with a burning,

George wandered alo
despair. Where was any
lities of Sam Slick's Ken
alligator, to set in amongs
crew?

At length he pitched, i
little vacant space.

"Avast there, mate," sh
"that belongs to a Dutch
pegs?"

George saw the pegs, a
long before he could see a s
ground, but at length he d
gular spot between three oth
pick.

"Hands off there, old f
said the huge head of a h

little parlour; d'ye object? If so, I'll get a neighbour to occupy it."

"No," said George, and walked on, saying to himself, "Is this a scene for a gentleman?"

Many a long hunt, and many a rude rebuff he experienced before he could secure a claim; and when he began to dig he was speedily reminded of the romantic accounts he had read, of just turning the gold out of the soft earth a few feet deep, as you would turn out potatoes. The gravel that he had to delve into was as hard set as a brick wall. Totally unused to manual labour, though yielding to no one in strength, he soon found that it was not very like wielding a pen at a desk. The sun seemed at once to burn off the very skin of his face, neck, and hands, and to melt him down as a contribution to the stream. His hands were soon covered with blisters, and a painful sense came over his mind that if he found gold he would have most dearly earned it when got. Wearied, dejected, and sore, as if the sun had really flayed him alive, he returned to the tent at evening, and sat down silent, and on the verge of despair. Never, since he was born, had he had such a suspicion that he was a fool.

But Adam set about to cheer him up, told him all would go well in a while, and insisted the next

day on going to look on, if not to help. Very soon he jumped into the hole, took his turn with the pick and shovel, and from that day worked regularly and stoutly. In about a week, they had got down to nearly the depth of the surrounding holes, whose owners had already finished, and were gone away to fresh ground.

"We are certainly about down," said George, striking his pick into the gravel at his feet; when down indeed it went, and he tumbled into a hole like a cellar beneath! The active neighbours had undermined their claim, and had walked off with the booty! Soon there was a crowd of diggers round the hole, pretty well aware of what would take place, and loud was the laughter at "the gentleman's cellar," and loud exclamations of "what a sell!"

We shall not follow our heroes step by step, through this arduous field. Their experience was varied, often comical, but by no means amusing to them—least of all, profitable. The four pounds of George Widdrington—their sole resource, for Adam's little fund was gone—were rapidly melting away; and of all the tons of gold which had been secured, not an ounce had yet fallen to their share. They had worked on the hill and in the valley; in the wet and

in the dry. They had rushed away to new rushes, and tried fresh spots for themselves, with the same result. Starvation stood before them. "This will never do!" exclaimed Adam Swinburne. And the next morning there stretched across the front of their little blanket-tent, occupying some six feet by five, and three feet high, in large black letters traced on a piece of calico with the end of a bruised stick, and by the aid of a blacking-bottle, this magnificent monograph, "MEDICAL HALL. DR. SWINBURNE, FROM THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS."

Let us see what will come of that.

As the great Dr. Swinburne could not leave the Medical Hall, he set himself about enclosing it with post and rail, and ornamenting it by the importation of various flowering shrubs from the neighbouring forest. He had neither mortar nor scales, nor any drugs to weigh and compound in them; so he proposed to supply himself from a druggist's not far off, should he be fortunate to obtain any patients. And these were not long wanting. Accidents were con-

stantly occurring on the field, and George, who was prowling about for fresh claims, was sure to cry out, "To Dr. Swinburne's!" and helped to carry the patient there. Adam's real cleverness was soon perceived, and practice followed rapidly. Not a word of advice was given under a sovereign, and a few doses of medicine were rewarded with an ounce—that is, an ounce of gold, value three pounds seventeen shillings.

"Who would dig?" said Adam, triumphantly, as he tossed the first real sovereign in his hands. "George, you shall be tent-keeper and cook, and we 'll go halves till there 's enough for you to start as a lawyer with in Melbourne; and then you shall give me halves for the first year. There! That I know is a good bargain for me."

George set to work in his new post. Soon, they had a Medical Hall of really grand dimensions for canvas, and not only a pestle and mortar and medicines, but Adam had his horse, and rode far and wide through the diggings. George was groom; and, as they had little to be robbed of in the tent—for Adam every evening carried his cash to the gold-office at the government camp—when Adam was on his rounds, George amused himself by felling poles in the woods just by, and peeling stringy-bark, with

which he soon built a stable near the Medical Hall. The horse was fed on hay and oats at a shilling a pound each; and they themselves on bread at five shillings the quartern loaf, potatoes at one shilling a pound, and fresh butter at five shillings. But what then? The gold now flowed in in a royal stream. Adam plucked out a digger's tooth—a pound; clapped a piece of sticking-plaster on a bruised arm—a pound; gave a dose of salts in a bottle of water and a little colouring matter—a pound. Nothing was done under a pound popped into the hand at the moment. A particular case, and down came "an ounce."

"Doctor," a digger would say, "just look at my leg."

"Ha! I see," replies Adam. "You must give over drinking."

"That's true," says the fellow. "But doctor, I've no money, but there's an ounce."

There was a deal of dysentery. Adam might have said with a certain doctor, "A world of sickness! Providence has been very kind to us lately!" but he was too humane. Nevertheless, he could not but exult in his unbounded success. "This is the true gold mine, George; you'll soon have to be off to Melbourne, and commence conveyancer. And yet,

what am I to do without you? Who is to watch my tent, and cook, and keep all straight, and have my horse ready, and in such condition? It is really a shame, George, to make a groom and butler of you; but there is nobody that can do like you. Well, a few weeks." In fact, Adam's practice was already at the rate of eight thousand a-year.

One morning Adam started up, for he had a hard day's ride before him. Typhus fever was raging in a low flat, where quantities of stagnant water had collected, and heaps of offal and all kinds of impurities were scattered over the ground, and rotted and festered in the sun. He had been there day after day for the last week, not only attending to the numerous poor people who were attacked by the fever, but in seeing sanitary measures carried out, by burning or burying the putrid matter. He had been led by the fœtid odour brought on the wind to a hill which overlooked the flat, and there had discovered a scene that made him stand in utter astonishment. It was a slaughter-yard, which had been recently deserted by the butchers being actually driven away by the intolerable stench, and the legions of flies which enveloped them at their business, and made it impossible to proceed. And what a scene! The whole hill-top was one mass of dried gore and piles of bullock's

heads, all rotting in an inconceivable fœtor, and blackened over with flies, which rose up with a sound as of thunder. Torrents of gore had rolled down the sides of the hill, and the fenced slaughter-yard was hung with hides which had curled and dried to the hardness of boards in the sun. No wonder at the typhus which raged below.

Adam rode off to the government camp, where an inspector lived with a salary of three hundred pounds a-year, whose main business was to prevent these very nuisances. But the man said no men were to be got to cover up the decomposing mass. Adam appealed to the commissioners, who replied with a shrug, and asked where the men at a pound a-day each were to be found. Without waiting to give a reply, he rode back to the flat, called together the diggers, and told them they must either relinquish the gold in the flat, or their lives; or they must come to the rescue, and bury the horrible Golgotha. At once, and to a man, they shouldered pick and shovel, mounted the hill of abomination, and in a single day its horrors were buried deep and secure from evil or offence.

This morning poor Adam, however, reeled forward, as he rose from his bed, and fell on the floor.

"Gracious heavens, Adam, what ails you?" cried George, springing to his assistance.

But Adam had already partly recovered himself, and sitting up, rubbed his hand across his forehead, and said, "Oh my head! my head! What's this?"

"What is it?" asked George, in alarm; "how do you feel, Adam?"

"Dizzy, dizzy," said Adam, "the tent goes round with me—the ground reels—Heaven help me! I must lie down."

He lay down again on his bed, while George, seeing over him in the utmost terror and anxiety, said,

"I fear for the worst, Adam: you are very, very ill, I know."

"Yes," said Adam, "it is, dear George; I know what it is—it is that fatal typhus."

George darted from the tent like one possessed, with nothing on but his shirt and trousers. With hair torn and careless of the myriads of broken bottles which strew the ground of every digging, he rushed away, unmindful of wondering looks and numberless inquiries from the surprised spectators. The same kind-hearted medical man who had attended Adam before was soon at his bedside. Adam was lying still, but pale: the slightest attempt to raise

his head producing the same reeling, rolling sensation. The doctor at once pronounced it an attack of typhus, and that it had seized powerfully on the system. It must, he said, have been gathering head for several days, but had been unperceived by Adam from his state of active exertion and excitement. He ordered the tent to be kept cool and well open to the air, and sent in immediately the necessary remedies. He promised to see him again in a very few hours, and to get another young surgeon to attend Adam's patients. When he left the tent, George threw himself on his knees by the bed, and, seizing Adam's hand, he said,—

"O, Adam! if I could but suffer this for you—you who are so much wanted—so useful—and I who am of no use to anybody."

"You, George! why you are everything to me. What could I do without you now? Listen, and yet don't frighten yourself, but let me speak to you while I can, for I may become delirious."

George gave a groan, and turned deathly pale.

"Nay, now," continued Adam, "you are frightening yourself, and yet all may be well, and most likely will, for I am young and strong, but it is necessary to be prepared. Hear, then. If anything happens to me, you are to take everything for the present—

sell everything; and with the money in the bank, go down to Melbourne, and commence your career; you will succeed; and when you can do it without inconvenience, settle the few hundred pounds on my mother and sister—they are poor, and will miss me."

Here Adam was silent, as if serious thoughts pressed on him, and George was weeping and sobbing, strong man as he was, in an utter abandonment of grief. But Adam said again:

"Why, how now, George! that is really weak of you—I have no fear any way myself—if the fever should carry me off, God's will be done! but I am not imagining that; I only tell you what I should, as a prudent man, tell you. Pray get a branch, and drive away these flies."

George recovered himself, brought at once a leafy branch, and began waving it near Adam's head to keep the flies from his face.

"That is a delicious fan too," said Adam, with a smile; "and if you could read to me a little in the Gospels, that would indeed be luxurious."

George took the book, and began. His heart now clung to every word as to the sole anchor of earthly existence.

But Adam's precautions soon showed themselves just. The disease, spite of the most skilful and un-

remitting efforts of the doctor, grew and went on resistlessly. The weather was intensely hot; the flies, drawn, no doubt, by the miasma of the complaint, poured in by legions — eager, fearless, intensely active, and assailant legions — and it required all George's exertions to whisk them away with his never-resting branch from the face of his friend.

Adam's head was become more confused, his thoughts wandered, he was already delirious, though quietly so, and his mind was busy in the home of his youth. He told his mother and sister what he had been doing for them, how successful he had been; a few more years, and he should come back a very, very rich man, and then they should never know any more poverty, any more necessity with all its curtailings and contrivings. There was another being — a Mary Hepburn — who made a beautiful part of the picture of that fair future, and his dear friend George, his friend and brother, how were they all to love him for his kindness and faithful affection to him.

As he uttered these things, George listened with a heart ready to break, and often started up wildly, as if he would snatch and tear away the clinging evil that enveloped him. He saw here revealed the daily thoughts which reigned in the mind of poor Adam — which had made his rides so delightful, his

duties so easy; and now, if the worst happened, what was to become of those beloved beings for whom he had thus planned and toiled? How was he himself to bear it?

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the doctor, attended by another medical man. George's heart felt a spasm at the sight; it was proof that the doctor was himself alarmed. They requested George to allow them to be alone for a few minutes, and then the doctor, stepping out with a grave air, said to George:

"You must be courageous, my friend; you must not be cast down; but I fear the fever will prove too strong for us. It is a bad case, and I am very sorry. Poor Swinburne! he is a fine fellow, a noble fellow! I think I never saw such a man. So clever, so modest, and so good. If ever there was a martyr to a kind, generous heart, it is our friend. But what are you about?" perceiving George standing as if frozen to the spot, and trembling in every joint with emotion.

"You must not give way, Mr. Widdrington—you must not, indeed; we 'll try yet—we may succeed. All is as God wills, and as for you, you have so much to do. You must keep the tent as cool as you can; and these cursed flies, don't let them teaze him;

moisten the patient's lips with water, keep these cooling wet cloths to his head, and I'll be back presently."

The doctors in silence took their leave. George went in, threw himself down by the sufferer's bed, kissed passionately his burning forehead, and his fevered, dry hand, while poor Adam slept soundly and unconscious of his friend's affliction. What a watch of deep and speechless wretchedness was that of George Widdrington! With no soul to exchange a thought, a care, with—all alone in the world with this great grief, this overwhelming terror and trouble. Yet incessantly he waved the protecting bough, keeping back the undaunted pestilence of flies, and replacing cool cloths on the burning head of his friend, and moistening his parched lips.

The doctor re-appeared.

"He sleeps!" cried George; "sleeps deep and quietly—that must be well."

The information elicited no approving nod, or brightening expression, from the doctor.

"It is comatose sleep," he said; "it bodes us no good."

George was struck dumb, and the coldness of death seemed to go through his very marrow.

In that warm season of a climate so much warmer than our own, the progress of disease was rapid.

Adam slept on. Night came; the tormenting flies withdrew, and George sat motionless by the sick bed, the picture of desolation. Adam moved, opened his eyes, and seeing George as he there sat, haggard and ghostlike with watching and harrowing anxiety, put out his hand and said,

"Dearest George, we must part. I feel it—and I imagined it before. But you must bear up. You have many dear to you. If you are not happy in this country—go to them—that is the best fortune. And—but I will not repeat it—you will be kind to my beloved ones, as you have been kind to me. And now, dear George, one more chapter of St. John."

George was beside himself with grief; he sobbed hysterically, but could not speak a word. Yet he rose, brought the Bible, and after a hard struggle with himself, he opened the book and read, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."

At this point George felt a strong pressure of Adam's hand. He looked at him. Adam gave him an inexpressibly affectionate smile, and once more his eyes closed—his grasp relaxed—and George sat silently gazing upon him. This had continued about a quarter of an hour, when he perceived Adam

slightly move, give a faint sigh, and lie still. It was an ominous stillness. George started up, put his hand to his mouth, and sank back into his seat, clasping his head hard between his hands. Adam was dead!

If ever there was a desolate spot on earth, it was that tent that night; if ever a grief-prostrated being, it was poor George. Through those long dark hours he sat, and the whole world seemed dark with him. Till that moment he never seemed to have known all the goodness and pleasantness of his friend,—never to have valued him aright. That cheerful, hopeful soul,—that generous, unselfish nature,—that mind so full of knowledge and sunny thoughts, and cordial, genial humour. From the sight of the future he shrunk back; from that dark solitary road that he must travel amongst rude strangers alone.

But time stops for neither the happy nor the miserable. Morning came, and with it the doctor and the flies. In a kindly but energetic tone, he told George that he must rouse himself; that the funeral must take place that very day, and covering over the body with a sheet, he bade George go and attend to the horse while he went and gave the necessary orders. When he returned, he forced George away with him to his own tent, and kept him there.

We must not dwell on this melancholy part of our story. In a few days the remains of Adam Swinburne slept in the already populous cemetery of Forest Creek. George, exerting himself under the kindly influence of the doctor, had sold the tent and effects, the doctor wishing to purchase the horse, and for which, spite of George's remonstrances, he paid a very handsome price, though his medical attendance had, of course, been gratuitous to his brother practitioner. The money George had transferred to the Bank of Australasia, in Melbourne, with the exception of a small reserve for his own necessities, and as a loan, and sent an order to pay it over to their bank in London, for Adam's mother, to whom he wrote the melancholy news of her son's decease.

For himself, the prospect of a sedentary life in Melbourne, even with the hope of achieving a brilliant fortune, had at present no charms. At his heart there lay a heavy, cheerless weight. He seemed to need action, constant, restless action,—the air of the hills, the free freshness of the forest, hard travel, hard labour, to drive the deadly torpor from his spirit, to give him sleep at night. There was a fever in his blood that seemed to urge him on and on. So, in the rude phrase of the digger, he once more humped his swag, that is, threw the rolled-up blanket on his

back, with pick, shovel, and tin dish, and set out for fresh scenes.

We need not follow him too minutely. He travelled from one gold-field to another, and dug laboriously, and with varied success. But he was always a solitary digger; he never felt as if he could take a stranger into the place of Adam the inimitable. Autumn found him at the Ovens, much improved in his funds, but still restless and melancholy. Besides the death of Adam Swinburne, he had other griefs which lay heavy upon him. Since he set foot on Australian ground he had never received a single line from any one at home, nor could he learn from any new arrival that his letters homeward had been more fortunate. Every one attributed the fact, which was by no means a solitary one,—there were thousands of like cases,—to the inefficient condition of the Melbourne post-office, which, from a false economy of the colonial government, was not half manned, and was become an unfathomable limbo of letters and newspapers.

But this theory did not remove the fact that George had had no communication with his home friends, and a thousand uneasy and gloomily-shaping fancies haunted his mind. Had he not acted a foolish part? Thrown recklessly away the brightest

prospects for a mere ignis fatuus? Might not Ellen Mowbray have gradually come to consider him in the long period for serious reflection, as a fickle, impetuous, and not very sagacious character? The only person who could give him any news from home was a sailor, who had originally been a Warkworth fisherman, then had sailed in a Hull merchantman, and run off to the diggings. From him George heard that his own family was well: but that Mr. Mowbray was dead. When the man spoke of Miss Mowbray, he seemed to give George a look, as if he said, "Ay, and did not you miss it there, Master Widdrington? What a beautiful lady Miss Mowbray was grown! How she was admired! There was not a woman in Northumberland fit to carry her shoes after her; and now so rich as she was, he reckoned she would marry a lord or a duke at least."

That was the only news George had received since he landed; and poor and mere hearsay as the information of such a man was, it did not fail to disturb him. He resolved to return home, not as the prodigal son, unless he found open doors to receive him, but with the little capital he now possessed, to commence practice in Newcastle. Wonderful rumours were at this moment flying to and fro

of a new gold-field at Lake Omeo, on the Gippsland side of the snowy mountains. It was an expedition that seized powerfully on his feverish, restless mind. New scenes in the wildest mountain regions, a stout walk by swift rivers, and through mountain forests, over snow-crowned peaks, and amid the vigorous winds of autumn,— his heart felt cooled and lightened at the thought of it. From Omeo to Alberton was but a few days' journey, and then he would take ship for Melbourne and home.

The distance to Omeo from the Ovens was a hundred and seventy miles. In three long days, he had rounded the spurs of the mountains near Reid's Mill, and traced a good long track along the banks of the Mitta-Mitta. The river had ceased to pursue its quiet course in the lowlands, and came gaily and with a crystal clearness and vivacity through the steeper valley. Our hero, in his scarlet blouse, belted at the waist, and displaying there his trusty revolver, and with his rug rolled neatly on his back, his shovel slung by its handle on the elve of his pick, cut a striking figure as he strode along. His tall and graceful form, his elastic step, bid those who followed him to expect a face of equally fresh and handsome character to turn upon them as they passed; and there was an evident feeling of surprise

manifested in the grave looks of the passers-by, at the really handsome but careworn features of the young man. Handsome brown hair beneath his ruddy wide-awake, and a short, rather golden-hued beard, ought to have belonged to a youthfully cheerful face, but they shaded fine features on which there lay a sickly hue, and a settled gloom.

George Widdrington was seated on a fallen tree by the wayside on the evening of the third day of his journey. He was thinking whether he should there pitch his little tent for the night, or make another step onward. The country was become hilly, and increasingly toilsome for the traveller. Green ranges, thinly scattered with trees, rose finely at the feet of still more lofty and thickly wooded heights; and his eyes rested on the scenery with a pleasure which strongly tempted him to stop there for the night. While these thoughts were passing through his mind, a couple of equestrians appeared ascending the road. The one was an elderly gentleman, the other a young lady of striking figure, and in a fashionable habit and riding-hat. The lady was mounted on a remarkably handsome horse, and came slowly on, conversing with the elderly gentleman in a voice which excited, by its musical and cultivated tones, the wonder of our

traveller. "Do these deserts," he said to himself, "send forth apparitions like these?"

As the strangers passed, they both gazed earnestly at George, as if they saw more than an ordinary digger in his appearance. He involuntarily raised his hat to the lady who rode nearest to him, and she returned the courtesy by a graceful inclination of the head and a pleasant smile. But George Widdrington followed the lady with a fixed regard that partook of no little astonishment. What a lovely, sensible face: and what a strong likeness to Ellen Mowbray! The form was taller, the face of a more mature character; there was a wide difference, and yet a most wonderful resemblance. It was Ellen, and it was not: but who could it be having so kindred a look in this far-off world? George was lost in astonishment and greatly excited, and while his eyes were still fixed on the strange vision, he saw her speak to her companion. They stopped their horses, and the gentleman came back.

There was a remarkable mildness and gentleness in his appearance, and addressing George, evidently as a gentleman, he said:

"You are bound for Omeo, probably?"

"Yes," replied George.

"The night is coming on," said the stranger, "and

the roads beyond here are very steep. Had you not better stay here? My hut is just on the hill there" — pointing to a white house, not far off, that stood boldly overlooking the country.

"Thank you," replied George, smiling, "but I carry my house with me," touching his swag.

"But I think mine is better," rejoined the amiable old gentleman, "and it is much at your service. The night, I think, will be stormy. The birds are flocking in crowds down from the mountains, and that tells of wild weather in the hills."

"You are very kind, sir," said George, whose own curiosity drew him vigorously to learn something more of the lady. "I will gratefully accept your hospitality."

"That is right," said the gentleman, heartily. "You will see the track above," and he rode on.

George followed, full of strange thoughts and feelings, and wonderfully struck, when he reached the level of the range on which the station stood, at the view of the country around. Above and before him ascended lofty piles of hills, dark with forests, and bold with projecting forelands and retiring coves. Below lay a vast country and boundless breadth of dark woods, and near at hand green and swelling fields, having a soft yet bold beauty and a verdure

sprinkled with graceful trees, as if human cultivation and taste had been at work there, instead of the spirit of nature, which alone it was.

As he drew near the house, he saw that it was embellished by a large garden, in which apple-trees hung with their autumnal crop in the most prodigal profusion, in such abundance that they were obliged to be propped to prevent the branches being torn off by their load. In front, seats were placed on turf under the trees, and everywhere there were proofs that people of superior taste lived there, who had ideas beyond mere squatting. George took his way to the apartment where casual callers of the digger class were generally entertained, and deposited his load on the floor. But the master of the house speedily appeared, and requested him to accompany him to his own sitting-room, first offering him an adjoining bed-room to wash in.

On entering the sitting-room, which likewise presented many instances in its furnishing of the same superior style of living as was obvious without, he was presented to the young lady he had lately seen, and who, having put off her riding-dress, was busy preparing tea, which was on the table.

The likeness to Ellen Mowbray was not now so striking, and yet there was a likeness, in expression

as well as feature. But her form was taller and more slender, and she could not be less than six or seven-and-twenty years of age. She advanced as her father introduced George, saying, "Here is our guest," with the most affable and yet lady-like sweetness, and offered the young man her hand, thus, as well as by his instalment in their own apartment, showing that she knew him to be a gentleman, though a digger in costume.

"You have done well, I think, sir," she said, while motioning him to be seated at the table, on which stood not only tea apparatus, but substantial dishes of meat and pies, "to stay here, for the mountains are becoming almost too winterly for tent lodging."

George said he certainly was much better off here on many accounts.

"Do you know," said her father, who was busily helping their guest to some smoking beef-steak, "that I fear you will find yourself too late at Omeo for this season? The winter rains are certainly coming, and there will be too much water to allow you to work."

"I shall then only have my usual luck," said George.

"You have not been lucky?" asked his host.

"Not as diggers call luck," the young man replied.

"But as gentlemen find it, I suppose," said the lady, brightly smiling. George bowed.

"But how must I call you my young friend?" continued the father, "for one is awkward without names."

"My name is Widdrington."

"George Widdrington?" added the young lady, fixing a blushing and earnest, yet brightly smiling gaze at him.

"How!" exclaimed George. "You know my name!" He sat fixed with amazement.

"Oh!" continued the lady, rising suddenly and seizing his hand, "it is a name very familiar to us." And at the same time he found his other hand seized by the old gentleman, who, with his eye lighting with emotion, exclaimed, "Welcome, Mr. Widdrington, welcome—right welcome—to Mount Tracy!"

"But may I ask," said George, more and more overpowered with wonder, "by what means you know me, and who are they by whom I am thus so kindly accosted."

"Tracy is our name," said the young lady.

"Tracy! If I were in New Zealand the mystery would be clear; but here——"

"Here you see the very same Tracys," said the lady, still holding George's hand, and with features beaming with pleasure.

"Then you are the cousin of Ellen Mowbray," said George, more and more astonished, "and there goes another mystery, your strong likeness to her."

"Am I like her, think you? But, my dear father, was I not right when I said that was very like George Widdrington who sate by the road?"

"Again, you amaze me," said George. "You never saw me before; then how could you know me?"

"Do you think I had no reason to recognise you?" added she, taking down a miniature which hung amongst others on the wall, and presenting it to him. It was one which he had, shortly before leaving England, given to Ellen Mowbray, and saying, "I see," he sate down in a state of strangely mingled emotion.

"But this will be joyful news for your friends: we must lose no time in sending it off."

"Have my friends inquired after me?" demanded George.

"Have they inquired?" exclaimed Miss Tracy. "What! have you never seen advertisement after advertisement in the Melbourne papers, making all

possible inquiries after you? Don't you know that not a word has reached England respecting you since you left it?"

"I can't believe it," said George; "for no news, except one slight fragment of intelligence through a stranger, has ever reached me. As for the papers, I never read them."

"That is still more strange," said Miss Tracy, "for not a month passed without letters having been written to you."

"Of which," replied George, "I never received one."

"Then we have much to tell you," said Miss Tracy, first whispering a word in her father's ear; and then followed a long revelation of events and messages which gave George the most profound satisfaction. His own parents and brother were all perfectly well; Miss Mowbray was the same; and the very facts of her having sent over his portrait to her cousin, and set her to make every possible inquiry after him, were unmistakeable evidences that her feelings towards him were in no degree changed. The whole was to him like a sudden opening into heaven. A deadly weight was thrown from his bosom. The hovering shade cleared wonderfully from his brow. As by a strange enchantment, he found himself

at once in the house of affectionate friends, and in communication with his own nearest and dearest connections. The vast circle of the globe seemed suddenly reduced to compassable dimensions, over which the voices of those he loved could at length reach him.

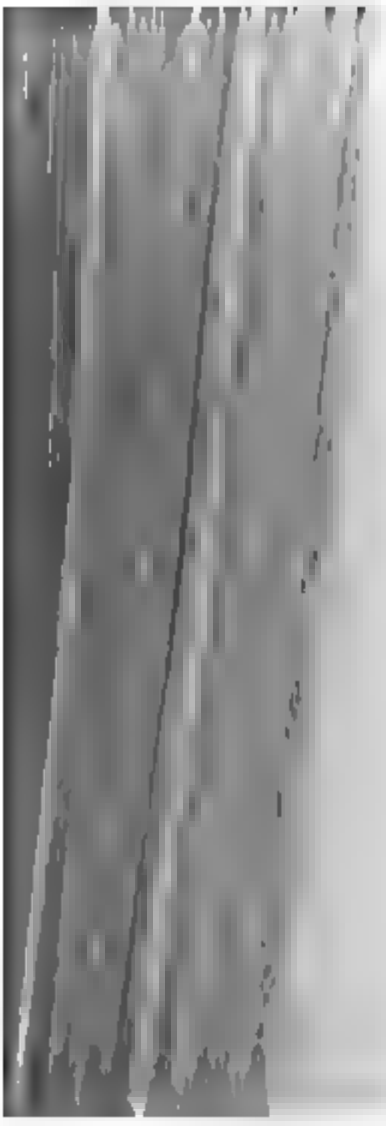
After Mr. Tracy had retired for the night, he sate with Miss Tracy, and soon found that she was perfectly acquainted with his history. She left him in no doubt as to the warm and unshaken attachment of her cousin to him, and of the zealous and continued exertions she had made to trace him out, both for the satisfaction of his anxious family and her own. She produced and read him many extracts from Ellen's letters, and George went to bed that night and dreamt dreams of youth and happiness renewed. In the noble heart of so devoted a woman as Ellen Mowbray he felt himself richer than if he had dug up all the gold in the creeks of Victoria.

The next day, Miss Tracy, whose good, clear sense, and warm-hearted character he more and more admired, took him a long ride through the woods and hills, which greatly raised his ideas of the country there, and on their return, as he waited for dinner, he heard voices in the adjoining room, which was the sleeping-room of Miss Tracy, the house being

only of one storey, which made him wonder what guest had arrived in his absence. It was the voice of another lady, very like in its utterance to that of Miss Tracy. Presently, as the conversation grew more earnest, he caught a tone which thrilled through his heart like fire. It was the very tone of Ellen Mowbray, as he had heard it in her happiest moments, and as he thought he never could confound with any other. But that could not be hers; she could not be here.

As he stood full of wonder in that most wonderful house, which at every instant gave him a new surprise, a bright face appeared at the door, an exclamation of delight was given, and Ellen Mowbray herself was in his arms.

There she was, glowing and trembling with emotion, beautiful as ever, but with the expression of a saddened experience, and a woman's deepest anxiety, stamped on those lovely mind-ennobled features. George now learned that after her father's death Ellen, on learning that her uncle Tracy had removed from New Zealand to this colony, had determined to pay them a visit, and learn, if possible, the fate of her lover. She had left her property in the care of George's father. She had been here three months, occupied — hitherto in vain — with inquiries after him.



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racter differed much from that of poor Adam Swinburne, and could never take the same sacred place in his heart, but was one for which he soon felt a brotherly affection. The two young men hunted together in the woods and mountains, where the kangaroo and emu still remained plentifully, and where the nightly howlings of the wild dogs told them that they could never want beasts for the chase.

So greatly were both George and Ellen Mowbray delighted with the country, and with the society of their affectionate relatives, that they determined to settle there at least for some years. This resolve was received by their friends with exultation. With such a society they could never be lonely; and the noble features of that mountainous district, with its resources for the chase, and the reconnoitring of its great herds of cattle which ranged the hills and hilly glades, its free, uncircumscribed rides, and an ample supply of books and music from England, gave a grand charm to their existence.

The following spring, George and Ellen, and Captain Maitland and Miss Tracy, were married on the same day, by a neighbouring clergyman. The Captain took his wife to his own station, and George and Ellen remained with the kind and fatherly Mr. Tracy. Since then, George's father and mother have

gone over, and settled near them. Andrew, the other son, sticks to the old dwelling of Windy Haugh. The house of the Mowbrays is let.

Old Mr. Widdrington finds endless subjects of wonder in everything around him: the immense estates over which the flocks and herds wander; the very little land put under the plough; the strange jumping creatures, the kangaroos, and the long-legged runners, the emus, vastly amaze him; and not less that the hares jump like the kangaroos, and the rabbits have got up into the trees. The natives, too, excite his wrath and contempt: poor, feckless things, rambling about worse than gipsies, and downright arrant beggars, where there is such a scarcity of labour. He believes they have grown black by never washing themselves, and rubbing grease over their bodies to keep off the flies, which, he thinks, catch the soot of their fires, that they sit over for days together.

In one of George's journeys down to Melbourne, he came across Tom Boyd, tending his flock on a very solitary station, and as he had read all his books, and was just thinking of going home, he has persuaded him to exchange sheep for cattle, and Tom has done it, and gone up to Mount Tracy, lured by the promise of more books, and the opportunity of talking with old Mr. and Mrs. Widdrington, real Coquet

Dale people, and who know all about Simonside Moor, Otterburne, and the Border.

We think it would be difficult to find a more congenial knot of people than is now settled about Mount Tracy. Sometimes, indeed, the Widdringtons and Tom Boyd talk themselves into such fits of enthusiasm, about Border raids, the Douglas, the Percy, and all the tales of the moss-troopers that lay about Liddesdale and Tynedale, with wraiths and haunted castles, that they think there 's no place like Northumberland, and that some day they will go there again; but in our opinion it will not be to-morrow, nor the next day, no, nor the day after.

After Charles's return from his tour with Mr. Farbrother, he accepted a very different offer, that of accompanying Randall into New South Wales, to hunt up what is called a mob of horses for the Melbourne market, a most arduous, but a most profitable business. They had to gather these from distant stations; help to collect them from the wild forest; and then bring them down, keeping these wild creatures together in the open hills and pastures, swimming them, and swimming with them across rivers, and watching them by night. It was a pursuit which required desperate riding, violent exercise,

perpetual vigilance, and boundless patience. These noble animals, accustomed all their lives to run free in the boundless woods, were wild as the winds; and when their proposing captors approached, made off with snorting nostrils and flying tails and manes in the magnificent grandeur and grace of free nature. The hunters, for such they might be called, had to follow, to tire down, to outstrip, to turn and turn them with thundering whips, and fierce shouts, and headlong galloping, till they had sufficiently quailed them, and impressed them with the ascendancy of the spirit of man, to cause them to move on before them in a throng or mob, without any tie or coercion but the conscious restraint of a power exceeding their own, till, with many adventures, many partial rebellions, many fleet gallops for escape, they landed them in Melbourne, cooped them in yards, and by whip and shout, and alternate soothing tones, finally reduced them to the halter and the trace, compelling them to resign their beautiful citizenship of the woods, and become the slaves and drudges of man's cupidity and dominance.

When Charles once more reached home, another year had rolled round, and Tallangetta stood bright and calm on the scene, as if it would stand there for ever. The chase, and the intercourse of visitants,

which were now more or less frequent at Tallangetta, were the only things which varied existence; and many a time did a deep impatience of some great *denouement* urge the heart of Charles in his bosom.

Nothing so broke up the monotonous calm of this period, as the warm spirit of controversy, which, on many points, had sprung up in the colony, and, sending their animus into every quarter of it, were often strenuously discussed at the dinner-table and in the barrack-room at Tallangetta. We should not give the reader a thorough view of the Squatter's Home at this juncture, if we did not relate something of what took place there. First and foremost amid all questions stood the Waste Land question, and as it affected more than all the interests of the squatters, and the counter-interests of the public, so was it discussed with proportionate energy, noise, and often violence, by persons of the different parties. Then there was the question of want of a proper supply of religious teachers for the bush and the diggings, and with this was mixed up wonderful stories of the wonderful growth of sudden riches amongst the trading and speculating classes of Melbourne. We cannot go argumentatively into these questions; we leave that to the traveller and the statistician; but we think we can give their leading features and

bearings in some narratives which were related at the table, around the nicotian fumes of the barrack-room.

"Here's a new song for you, Charles," said Georgina one day. "And, by the bye, I wonder where that Spenser Grayson has picked up all his information, his anecdotes, his witticisms, and, above all, his songs. Why, he is a first-rate poet, do you know, and he sings his own songs. He has most admirable songs of this colony, equal to the Squatter's Song, which you heard at Bendigo, or the Bushranger's Song, that you heard too. His Commissioner's Song, oh! it is a most rare burlesque; but now listen to my song, which, as a digger, you ought to sing." And Georgina carolled out in a mock serious sort of style, which greatly amused Charles,

Jeptha's Daughter.

Old Jeptha Slaughter sits amid
  His mates, the diggers three,
And he lifts his can, just like a man
  That fain would merry be.

He is a grim old cove, is Jeptha,
  And all his mates are so;
And deeds they 've done, ay, every one,
  Should have hanged them long ago.

But Dinah Slaughter sits alone
Under the Banksia tree,
And all alone she makes her moan,—
"Not a man will marry me.

"No, not a man will marry me,
Though I 'm pretty and girls are few;
For I 'm come of a stock that gives a shock
And a frightnin to Jemmy Drew."

Oh! Jemmy Drew was close behind,
And in his arms he caught her;
Says "that 's not true, for here 's Jemmy Drew,
And he 'll marry Jeptha's daughter."

"Bravo!" cried Charles. "I must have that. I know plenty of old Jepthas."

But who was this colonial poet, this Spenser Grayson, this man of wit and story? He was no fictitious character. The annals of the colony and the pages of the *Melbourne Argus* can give full information of him under another name, and furnish the curious reader with curious specimens of his talents, with which he favoured that journal, or our friends at Tallangetta.

This Spenser Grayson, or Dr. Spenser Grayson, was a gentleman who had turned up since Charles went away. He professed to be a naturalist, and had taken up his quarters at a hut on the Quarriers' run,

near the Goulbourn, where the shepherd's wife cooked for him, and from whence he made his rides, appearing and disappearing at irregular intervals, and bringing home with him a quantity of plants and stones, which he examined by a book, and laid up in an old box. He was a wonderful favourite at all the stations round, and was a continual guest at Tallangetta, where every member of the family was charmed with him. At table he was the life of the party. His anecdotes of life in London, where he had lived; his exquisite mimicries of celebrated characters, and droll stories of them, convulsed all who saw and heard them with laughter. He had been in India, in the Mauritius, and South America; and his information appeared immense. He was a tall, well-made man, of at most five-and-thirty. His hair was black as a raven's. His beard, which he wore short and crisp, gave to his olive complexion and handsome oval features a somewhat foreign appearance; yet his style, tone, and language were essentially English. He wore a dark suit, dark grey pantaloons, and black boots, cut round and plain at the top, a little below the knee. His hat was a black felt, with a broad brim, a broad band, and flat crown. His hands were soft and delicate, and adorned with jewelled rings of great value.

Altogether he was a most striking man in person and style. Charles had soon an opportunity of making his acquaintance, and was as much fascinated by him as the rest.

It was not many days, indeed, after Georgina's singing of Jeptha's Daughter that Grayson sate in the barrack-room, with his meerschaum in his mouth, gravely listening to a fierce debate on the Squatter's Right question, betwixt Messrs. Quarrier of the Goulbourn, and Parson Docker of the Ovens on the one part, and Dr. Owen and Mr. George Thompson on the other, the latter of whom were on their way to the Ovens from Castlemaine to attend a monster meeting on the subject. When every one had argued himself into a fever, Grayson said, "Come, I'll give you all the practical truths of the subject in a real narrative that has come to my knowledge. We will call it the Old Squatter and the New."

CHAP. XVI.

THE OLD SQUATTER.

In the year eighteen hundred and thirty-five wonderful rumours spread themselves over the pleasant little island of Tasmania of new regions on the other side of Bass's Straits. At little more than a hundred and fifty miles' distance, it was said, there spread beautiful pastures, green and fertile and beautiful woodlands, where the forest trees were so lightly and airily scattered, that the turf grew strong, and fresh, and sweet beneath them, as on the openest plains, or the fairest downs. These park-like expanses, stretching themselves for hundreds of miles in all directions, were here washed by the ocean, and here stretched at the feet of far-off blue-glancing mountains. Rivers and lively brooks wound invitingly through them, and occasional lakes gave their refreshing charm to plains of most luxurious fertility.

Certain adventurous men who had assumed the profession of whalers, it was said, had for some time haunted these elysian shores; now skirting their lofty

and more thickly-forested portions, and now anchoring in secluded creeks and bays, where they varied their ocean life by hunting the kangaroo and emu through the lovely pastures and the pleasant evergreen woods. So charming had they found this life, that they had resolved to enjoy it continually, and had therefore built huts on the shores of a fine bay, and had stealthily carried over in their whale-boats flocks and cattle, and all that was necessary for a jocund and plentiful Robinson Crusoe life.

But such fairy lands, wherever they lie, are too alluring to remain long *terræ incognitæ*. King Arthur is supposed to have lain hidden some thousand years or more in the isle of Avalon, waiting for the day when it shall be necessary to turn out and save his country, and as said country appears yet very able to save itself, he may, with our consent and that of posterity, probably stay there another thousand. But that is the only instance in which a man can keep such a desirable country to himself. Little Tasmania, having been only inhabited by the white man about thirty years, was already become glutted with his flocks and herds. Fertile as were the valleys of Van Diemen's Land, a great portion of the island was occupied by wild, rugged mountains, and still more by dense and often barren forests. In these

thirty years of European possession the population had reached the sum of forty thousand, of whom no less than seventeen thousand were England's expatriated criminals. The little more than twenty thousand free men already found themselves masters of eight hundred thousand sheep, which were palpably becoming too many for the capabilities of the pasturage, especially in summer, when the grass was scorched, and, as it were, dead.

The news of the new regions of fertility and boundlessness, "on the other side," as the phrase became and remains, were, therefore, listened to with avidity. Not only did individuals hasten to get over, but companies were formed, to purchase vessels, and large tracts of country from the natives, when they had reached the promised land. First and foremost among these adventurers were John Pascoe Fawkner and his associates, who, procuring a ship from Sydney, steered across with their cattle and people from the heads of the Tamar in Van Diemen's Land, to the present bay and site of Port Phillip.

But the spirit of enterprise was awake, thousands were on fire to expand themselves over limitless regions of fertility; the cry of the whole island was "to-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new;" and others had contrived to outstrip the Fawkner party.

As their vessel, bearing, as they supposed, the nucleus of a new colony, made its way up the spacious bay of Port Phillip, a man descended from an eminence, now called Indented Head, and warned away those who had hoped to be the first patriarchs of the soil. This was one John Batman, who, with a company of fifteen others, including a Mr. Gellibrand—an eminent lawyer of Van Diemen's Land, destined to perish by the tomahawks of the natives, and give his name to several hills in the new country—had not only outstripped Fawkner, but had purchased a tract of six hundred thousand acres of the natives.

Thus he came down on the people of the little ship Enterprise, not only as a prior arrival, but as a proprietor of the ground. But John Fawkner, who was destined to cut a much greater figure in the new country than Batman of the Indented Head, sailed coolly up the bay, and planted his standard on a rising ground at its head, and near the mouth of a pleasant river. Here, disregarding the aboriginal claims of Batman, he built the first hut, opened the first inn, ploughed up the first ground, issued the first newspaper—a manuscript one—and became the founder, if not of the colony, as he yet styles himself, the undoubted founder of Melbourne. The Messrs. Henty, a year or more before, had established

themselves as the first settlers at Portland Bay, Batman had established himself at Indented Head, but neither of these were to become the capital of the new El Dorado: Melbourne was to be its Rome, and John Fawkner its Romulus.

Of the strifes and rivalries of the new pastoral invaders,—how John Batman came indignantly and sate himself down face to face with the equally indignant but imperturbable Fawkner, on that pleasant round hill still called Batman's Hill; how the British government, claiming to have a much better title to the land than the natives, the all-prevailing one of

> "He shall take who has the power,
> And he shall keep who can,"

disallowed Batman's purchase from the wild tribes; how Batman dwindled and Fawkner grew, till he became, and remains to this day, a conspicuous member of the legislative council, and has seen his settlement expand in twenty years from a knot of six individuals to a city of ninety thousand inhabitants;—all these wonders are to be found written at length in the chronicles of Victoria.

Amongst the tribes of adventurers who followed in the wake of Fawkner and Batman as circumstances permitted, we shall select one group, and follow it as

descriptive of the fortunes of the many. The group consisted of three men; a tall, active young fellow of not more than thirty years of age, accompanied by two sturdy, rough-looking louts of considerably maturer years. Tom Scott, the leader of the party, had the air of a clever young farmer. He was full six feet in height, of a fair, fresh-coloured complexion, with brown hair, and a brown, somewhat thin beard, kept short, but unshaven. His face was inclined to the oval, his nose good and straight, his eye clear and intelligent, his frame muscular, but remarkably light and active. He was quick in his movements, decisive in his manner, and seemed to possess the most absolute influence over the two heavy but resolute-looking fellows who accompanied him. Tom Scott was mounted on a leanish, wiry black mare, and wore one of those stout cabbage-tree hats resembling straw, which were already exported from Sydney, a shooting-coat of coarse grey cloth, and stout leather gaiters, all somewhat dashed by exposure to weather and the woods. Before him, rolled up tight, he carried a blanket to wrap himself at night, and his two companions bore on their backs a similar roll, with sundry tins, axes, and knives hanging from their belts. Every man carried his gun, that of Tom Scott

being slung on his back, while a brace of large pistols showed themselves at his side.

These men drove before them what would there be called a little flock of six hundred sheep. They had made the whole cargo of one ship, some eight or ten of which vessels were bringing from thirty to forty thousand a year. Our friend Tom Scott had therefore no expectation of finding a free pasture near the coast. He had, indeed, made an exploratory trip beforehand; and following the great stream of pastoral immigration which flowed westward, had found a rich, fine country, but already occupied by numbers of people, who were wrangling, and even fighting about encroachments on each other's claims and boundaries. Tom Scott, therefore, resolved to steer northward, in which direction boundless wilds seemed to invite him. But, in truth, his sheep were in no hurry; probably they had not found much store of provender on ship-board, for both they and Tom's mare began voraciously to devour the grass of the green slopes where now run the busy streets of Bourke, Swanston, Elizabeth, and Collins, displaying their gay shops, townhall, banks, newspaper-offices, and churches, raised on ground as costly as if it were of solid gold.

But all then was open forest, fresh and pleasant.

It was the vernal month of September. The ground was scattered with flowers, the grass was luxuriant as in the meads of England. The dusky gum-trees were but sparsely scattered over hill and dale, giving to English eyes the aspect of a park; and along the clear river side grew masses of acacias, heavy with the weight of vegetable gold, which spread their fragrance over the whole scene. Our Arcadian trio, seeing their flocks were well employed in the green glades of the forest, threw themselves down under a venerable red gum-tree, drew forth provisions from their swags, and one of the bushy-bearded comrades being dispatched to Fawkner's public, a little bark hut on the opposite hill, for brandy, and the other down to the river for water, they were soon lolling in great comfort on the sward, taking a leisurely survey of the scenes around them, and considerably approving of this first specimen of the new country. This scene consisted of the cheerful open forest slopes, trending downwards towards the river, with wooded plains and low hills beyond; and amongst the trees around them the white gleam of scattered tents. Here and there were open spaces where the trees had been felled, and huts of bark or slab, thatched with reed, or long coarse grass from the river-banks, were erected, with some little enclosure

for a garden, fenced in by heaps of the gum-tree boughs with all their dried leaves upon them. A few fowls, goats, and a stray cow or two—these were the sum total of the Melbourne of that day.

So soon as the party found that the flock was willing to trudge forward a little, they slowly ascended the slopes, and as evening drew on, took up their station for the night on the crown of the hill, which displayed to them beyond a wide stretch of unknown country, looking one unbroken mass of forest, with different mountain ranges showing themselves over it. As near as we can guess, they camped their flock for the night on the very spot where another shepherd now watches his — namely, the Bishop of Melbourne, whose palace of solid native trap-stone marks unintentionally the first pastoral resting-place of Tom Scott and his sheep.

Here they saw sights which their successor, the chief shepherd of the Melbourne of to-day, is too late for. Numbers of the natives were scattered about over the hill and on the plains below, where the river wound along between its deep banks, and overhung with lofty trees. Each family was squatted down under a few gum-tree boughs, which reached their highest idea of domestic architecture, all except the unmarried young men, who were located in

groups at bougheries of their own. Fires were burning in the centre of these sable family groups, at which they were roasting pieces of the flesh of the kangaroo or the opossum, and of fish from the river; and they seemed to have a particular penchant for meat done rare. Miserable groups they looked, some with worn and tattered mantles of opossum-skin, some clothed only in the bare skins provided by nature. Lots of little tun-bellied children, innocent of all wrappings, tumbled about amongst a tribe of hungry, fire-singed dogs, and women whom the graces never deigned to recognise, cowered behind their lords, and caught, ever and anon, some half raw and inferior morsel flung to them over their spouses' shoulders.

As the night approached, throngs of the natives, men, women, children, and dogs, were all seen moving to one spot, now the quarters of a different race — the mounted police. No sooner fell the darkness, than out blazed a number of huge fires round this space, made of the boughs and trunks of trees. Round one of these, a number of women took their places, squatting on the ground. Then came numbers of naked men, their swarthy bodies hideously painted with red, and striped in various barbarian figures and lines of white with pipe-clay. Every-

one carried in each hand a small branch of the flowering wattle, and anon they ranged themselves in a wide circle, all, with elevated and outstretched arms, crossing between man and man their wattle-twigs. At once the women burst forth with a wild kind of song, beating time simultaneously with the right arm, and away went the dance of the men in obedience to the chant and to the directing motions of a native band-master, who stood on the trunk of a huge fallen tree at hand. Wildly whirled the demon-looking crew — now in circles, now in crescents, now in squares, and strangely intersecting lines. Still wilder grew the cries and songs of the women — quicker, quicker, quicker; shriller, louder rang their notes — faster, furiously, frantically waved their arms, and rapidly, rapidly, wildly, weirdly, madly danced and shrieked the men. Top! — all was still. Then slow and low and plaintive awoke once more the song of the women, and slow and mournfully moved the now long lines of dancers. There was something spectral, haunting, and unearthly in the scene. The movements were as silent and flowing as those of spirits; and the fluttering of the fire flames, and the wind in the trees, were the only sounds which mingled with the faint and mournful dirge of the women. But once more the scene changed. The

songs of the women became gradually louder and more agitated; the grim dancers accelerated their motions and threw fresh force into their bounds. Again the dance grew fast and furious, and the shrieks of men and women, the barking of dogs, the flashing of fires on blood-red bodies, wild glaring eyes, and grinning teeth, the whirl and change of the madly-leaping and bacchanal route, produced a scene of appalling wonder that can only be expressed in the words, savage life.

A day earlier, and our adventurers would have been arrested in their progress by having to witness a native battle, where boomerangs and spears flew in marvellous confusion, and heavy waddies thumped on bark shields; and where each contending army might have reported, in the true Gortschakoff style—the enemy did us no harm whatever. This was the feast of reconciliation.

These did not seem very auspicious circumstances under which to make a progress up a wild country; but they were, in truth, the very best. The natives were drawn to this one spot from many a score miles of wild woodland, and all the securer the little party drove on their little flock. But in the absence of natives, there were still many dangers and difficulties in the way. The wilds were untracked.

They made their way by noting every day the quarter in which the sun arose and set, and where it cast the shortest shadow at noon. Sometimes they found themselves obstructed by miles of bogs, and had to wander round them. Occasionally, at this early season of the spring, they were overtaken by several days of heavy, incessant rain, and, destitute of a hut to flee to, as in their abandoned home in Tasmania, they were drenched through and through. Fire they found it impossible to kindle, or keep in; everything, like themselves, being soaked with wet. Occasionally, they could find a hollow tree into which they could crowd, and where all day they stood steaming and shivering; but at night they were compelled to be on the alert, for troops of wild dogs came down upon their flock, and at the first furious bark of their own dogs, giving the alarm, they must out, though it poured torrents, and chase away the sneaking, wolfish beasts, or their flock would speedily be dispersed through the bush, and scores of them killed.

In the course of a fortnight, they had made considerable progress; but they had almost perished with cold and wet during the rainy weather; and inured as they had been to years of forest life and labours in Van Diemen's Land, they were now attacked with rheumatic pains, and were hoarse with

colds, from living day and night in their wet clothes. What flour and tea they had they carried with them; there were here no shops, or road-side inns to resort to; and though Tom Scott had turned his mare into a pack-horse, and carried along with them their stores in panniers covered with a bullock's hide, they were compelled to be extremely sparing of their resources, for they did not know when they should get more. Their only chance of supply was from stations, and stations yet were few and far between, and only newly settled. The inhabitants, therefore, were themselves mostly at their wits' end, and when they had the necessary commodities were not willing to part with them. Their only chance of maintaining subsistence was to arrive at a suitable location for sheep, that was still unappropriated, and then to build their hut, and send down to Melbourne for fresh stores.

Meantime, they spared their flour as much as possible, by killing game, but ammunition too was precious, and they rarely expended it except on the amply remunerating mass of a kangaroo. Parrots and bronze-winged pigeons flew in flocks around them, but they could not afford to waste powder upon them, and the opossum, dragged from his hole

in the hollow tree, furnished them and their dogs with meat, when better failed.

Thus they wandered on, looking daily for the desired spot, where they should build their hut, and call the place their home. And many such they saw. Here pleasant undulating lands, thinly scattered with trees, and clothed with richest turf, offered amplest pasture for their flock. Here valleys stretching between forest hills, and watered by clearest streams, presented all the elements of a pastoral home. Here richest meadows, lying at the feet of the mountains, suggested dreams of roaming herds, and the uplands on the spurs of the hills for their flocks. Vast plains, capable of grazing boundless flocks, and green conical hills, which gave immense prospect over them, invited them to stay. But it was nature alone which invited them; man bade them sternly move on. Other adventurers were already tracking these wilds; other flocks and herds were already seen streaming up through the woods, as it were, in inexhaustible trains. Men, eager, in hot haste, keenly fired by the spirit of acquisitiveness, as in the most crowded city, were running and riding onwards to seize and to possess the world that had so marvellously opened upon them, with its rich pastures and green-swarded woods. Meum and Tuum were abroad with all their furious,

jostling, hostile-hearted tribe, and sleepless eyes were restlessly, fiercely glancing before, and behind, and sideways, to descry a goodly heritage, and strong, clutching, armed hands were quivering to clutch, and pounce upon, and hold. To clutch, and hold, and defend. Wherever our travellers stopped to camp for noon, or for night, some strange wild object came riding from the forest, and cried "This is mine! move on!"

When they thought themselves all alone in the woods; far, and immensely far from any human being, the first blaze of their evening fire was the signal for some one to start forth, from what appeared the desolate and manless woods, and cry, "What are you doing here?"

How far these men of the woods, these self-constituted lords of the wilderness, extended their claims; how many scores of square miles they grasped in their giant embrace; what boundaries of seas, rivers, lakes, or mountains they had set themselves, our travellers did not know, and it was vain to ask, for whether they turned right or left, these large-souled men still cried, "This is ours!" They could not see the extent of their assumed domains, but they could see the men themselves, and that was enough. They were of a

countenance and a kind not only to take but to defend *vi et armis.* They rode well foreseen with rifle and pistols, as well for the resistance of their countrymen as of the blacks. They were from the Tasmanian Isle many of them, where they had been accustomed to shoot down, indiscriminately, kangaroo, wolf, native, and marauding felon. Years of conflict and danger, of onslaughts from banded convicts, and onslaughts on natives, when a Michael Howe led the one, and a Musquito the other. Days of rough riding and nights of watching, years of climbing rugged mountains and threading dense forests, far unlike these which they now inhabited, in search of new fields or of old enemies, with their homes suddenly burning about their ears at midnight, and their families rushing forth from the flames, and anon carrying the conflagration of vengeance into the retreats of their assailants — these were the men that they often found themselves front to front with; these were the men that they must fight with for the land if they had it.

Of the seventeen thousand criminals, burglars, highwaymen, assassins, *et hoc genus omne,* who flourished on the island they had left, many had found this a brave opportunity to escape, and try a new life of adventure in these boundless forests. And of others,

who came with the name of freemen, who could trace all the secrets of their origin and career?

Enough, the Tasmanian knew his fellow; he was familiar with the marks and signs of the various descriptions of his brother islanders; Cain's mark is broad and indestructible; the various shades of character are shades, the various lines of life are lines, and the practised eye reads them off as readily, as rapidly, as infallibly as you could read the title of a book in boldest type. Tom Scott and his faithful followers, Ben Brock and Joe Kitson, still moved on.

Once or twice they thought their opponents' pretensions so unreasonable that they were inclined to dispute them; and, looking at the comparative apparent strength of the two parties, they thought they could make good their ground. Scott was a bold fellow, a first-rate rider, a dead-shot, active, vigorous, undaunted, and indefatigable. He wanted no amount of spirit when he saw cause to exert it, and his stalwart associates were the strong and unflinching instruments of his will. Strong as oxen, slow, but ponderously powerful, they were like the very trees around them in solid resistance, and where their blows fell men fell under them. But in these cases where they stood somewhat inclined for battle, a few days brought up allies on the other side. Once

settled on the soil, there appeared to spring up in the squatters a principle of mutual defence, and men ready for the fight seemed to start by magic out of the ground and come forward to the rescue. There were no justices of the peace, no Crown Land Commissioners here to settle disputed claims, and, as Scott and Co. had come out to seek a fresh chance of life and not of death, they prudently went on.

They went on through scenes of strange contrast. Over those plains, under the interminable trees, amid those monotonous wastes, where one score of miles of unbroken country looked exactly like that before, and that behind it, in those deep valleys at the foot of far-stretching and wooded mountains, by those deep and solemnly journeying rivers, by those lesser streams enveloped in the dense shade of the tea-tree and the acacia, amid the barren, grey, and desolate region of granite, or on the green and airy down where only the graceful tresses of the shiock sighed in the wind, Nature seemed to have established the peace and the brooding solitude of ages. But that reign of profound calm — varied, but not disturbed, by the many voices of birds, the whirr of the cicada, and the audible breathings of the wind — was now over; and men, greedy, grasping, insatiate, and pugnacious, were encountered in loud and angry altercation.

Fierce defiance, resolute intrusion, calls for division, denunciations of unreasonableness, and taunts, and scoffs, and jeers, and blows, and vows of vengeance,—these were the scenes and sounds that stunned the ancient heart of the wilderness. The fairest place excited the foulest contention. Men had not to seek out and sit down upon their claims: they had to fight out their possession of them, and maintain it by right of conquest.

At length Tom Scott and his companions reached a spot where Nature smiled on them, and no man was present to frown. It was a region of low hills, where the trees grew pleasantly apart. The turf was fresh and clear of underwood, or, in the colonial phraseology, scrub. Two or three little runnels followed the course of the valleys, and promised water. Here they set to work, and built a small hut of stringy bark, and made a pen of boughs for their flocks. They had not lost more than a hundred sheep in their advance up the country, in the intricacies of the scrubby forest, by the wild dogs, and by the natives or low squatters who had managed to drive stragglers to their own folds. That was no great matter: they had five hundred sheep to begin the world with in a clean, open country, and they were full of hope. Their hut was of the humblest description. The

earth was its floor, and its only furniture were their beds raised on a framework of boughs on three sides of it, and consisting of a mass of leafy twigs, on which they lay wrapped in their blankets. The luxury of changing their clothes they never knew. Their great refreshment was washing in the little stream below, and there also washing their extra shirt. Their fire was made, in front of this rude abode, against the bole of a huge tree that had long lost its head in some tempest. Their cooking was of the simplest. They had long ceased to possess flour or sugar; their daily food consisted of the flesh of opossums broiled on the embers, without bread, and thankful they were still to retain a little salt and a little tea. Their ammunition, with all their economy, was exhausted, except a few charges which they kept in case of attack.

But the heart of the adventurer is not made to sink at small difficulties; hope in a brilliant future still bears him on; and Tom Scott was adventurously sanguine. In every struggle he was patient, in every annoyance he was buoyant, and cheered on his fellows; in the worst provocations he remained calm, though the colour often flushed into his face, and his hands longed to inflict chastisement on vulgar insolence and selfishness. But he looked onward, and resolved to

achieve a position of his own without contention. And here he seemed to have it. Neighbours, as yet, he could find none. Dreary and sandy plains on one hand seemed to extend for many leagues, low and swampy grounds on the other, which some day might become a rich summer run for cattle.

But now famine impelled, and he and Kitson must away to the embryo Melbourne for stores. Ben Brock must be left in charge of the flock, and, strong and resolute as he was, it was an anxious matter. While they were absent, he alone must bear the brunt of all visits from natives, wild dogs, or un principled adventurers. There was, however, no alternative, and the only thing was to make as expeditious a journey as possible. So black Peg, the mare, was mounted, and ridden alternately by the travellers, and they made all speed through the woods. They had nothing to carry: their provision for the way was a few handfuls of tea and their tin cans, and an opossum, dragged from its hole during the day's journey, and broiled on their evening fire. Before this fire, wrapped in their blankets, they slept; and one day was like another, till they reached the town. Tom Scott purchased as much flour, tea, and sugar as Peg could well carry, and they made their way back again with all speed. But it was now late in

November; the heat was become intense, and the country already bore traces of its withering effect. The grass was brown and crisp, the streams and pools had wonderfully shrunk, and it required a good long rest at noon to enable both men and horse to continue their journey. But by degrees they neared their station, and saw with increasing anxiety the change that a fortnight only had made. The plains over which they passed were scorched to a pale brown; the water had wonderfully vanished. Where there had been pools, there were dry hollows; where there had been streams, there were grey ravines. With difficulty they gained their own location, and stood riveted in consternation. The whole was one black waste; fire had passed over it, and mowed the grass cleaner than any human scythe. The fallen boughs were reduced to white ashes; the shrubs and young trees were burnt black, or singed into the ruddy hues of autumn.

After a moment's paralysis of terror, Tom Scott sprung forward, leaving his companion to follow with the horse. He was soon on the hill where their hut had stood. There it lay, a heap of ashes; the ashes of the sheep-fold fence marked a melancholy circle on the ground; and all around was a burnt waste. Where Ben and the flock had escaped to, if they had

escaped at all, was the question. Scott snatched the panniers from the mare as Kitson came up confounded with wonder; leapt upon her back, and commenced galloping in a wide circle. In this circle he came upon the singed carcase of a sheep, on another, and another. There was his clue; and still following it, he soon found himself in the swampy hollows—swampy which had been, but which were now baked as hard as a stone floor, and covered only with thin withered grass and shrubs. It was not, however, till towards night that he caught sight of Brock, with the miserable remains of the flock, in a deep hollow where there was yet some grass, and one small pool of muddy water.

Ben's tale was soon told. The heat had speedily dried up the little streams, burnt up the pastures, and compelled him to seek food for his flock in the swamps. These rapidly dried up; and to add to his anxiety, not being able to quit the neighbourhood till their return, every night he had been visited by troops of wild dogs, which, spite of his dogs and his own exertions, overleaped the fence of the pen, and committed havoc amongst the sheep. A week's watching had quite worn him out, when he found himself also attacked with ague, from lying with his sheep by day in the vapours of the drying swamps; and while

prostrated by this despot of a complaint, he suddenly saw the hills on fire, amid the screeches and halloos of a number of natives. The fire, kindled with practical regard to the wind, swept the whole district with a flying roar, and the blacks then came down upon him with showers of spears and horrible cries. Ben gave himself up for lost, but determined to sell his life dear. There were six of the natives; and, sheltering himself behind a tree, he coolly watched his opportunity, and shot down two of them. Before he could charge a third time, they rushed in upon him, flinging showers of stones as they advanced, and in another moment he fell senseless, struck on the head by a waddie.

How he still remained alive, he knew not; but on recovering consciousness, he found his gun still lying beside him, the natives gone, and the remains of his flock scattered in the woods. With infinite pains, still weighed down by the intermittent fever, consumed with thirst, his head dizzy and inflamed with the effects of the blow, he had hunted up the fragment of the flock—now only a hundred and eighty—the dogs and the natives having destroyed or driven the rest beyond recovery. Ben himself presented a woful spectacle; his head bound in an old handkerchief, his flesh wasted, his lips parched and cracked,

and the whole man reduced to a something betwixt a spectre and a scarecrow.

This was a miserable result of the expedition to Australia Felix. And here we may say that Tom Scott, born to no heritage but his hands, a brave heart, and a clear head, had raised his little flock by years of care, constant watching, and self-sacrifice. Every individual sheep was to him as a child, and he sate down at this blow, and, resting his head on his knees, gave himself up for a few minutes to despair. But in Van Diemen's Land he had left a fair and strong-hearted wife and two infant children, and at the thought of them he sprung up, wiped his hand across his eyes, as though he would whisk away his troubles, and cried: "This is of no use, my lads. Let us on, and try again."

And here, too, we may as well let the reader into another secret. The two followers of Scott were originally two convicts, two ticket-of-leave men. He had given them employment, discovered good in them, persuaded them to make a fresh effort for a good name and honest fortune, and had found them ready to follow him to the world's end. If he succeeded, they were to reap the benefit of it.

The three sad, but not utterly daunted men, went on once more. This time they selected a place where

there was more show of permanent water, and all seemed to go on well. Once more they built their hut, and employed themselves in attending to the autumnal increase of their flock; for in that country the flocks often produce lambs in autumn, and another portion in spring. But winter came, and with its rains they found their station laid almost wholly under water. Again they were compelled to go on in search, and at length came upon a tolerably fair stream, now called the Loddon. Here were wood, and rich valley, and upland; a change and a resource for all seasons. Here Tom Scott built himself a log hut; found himself in as fine a country — beautiful with its wooded hills, its broad expanse of rich meadow lands, its grassy uplands, and unfailing river — as the colony could show. Here, if ever, he must prosper. But his flock was terrifically reduced, his means of purchasing more were small, and nothing but a life of incessant care, activity, economy, and perseverance could enable him to avail himself of the splendid lands on which he had sate down. For ten years our squatter maintained himself there; and we may now, in a few sentences, relate the upshot of his fortunes.

Miserable were the first few years of our settlers. The lands on which they had settled were splendid, and therefore they were soon beset by rivals, en-

deavouring to get each a good large slice of the run. One sate down here and another there, and Tom Scott saw himself likely very soon to have to pasture his little flock on something less than nothing. He set about, therefore, lustily to drive off the invaders, who drove his sheep as constantly back again. Then came hard words, blows, threats, and animosities. Luckily, this state of things all over the colony compelled the establishment of Crown Land Commissioners and a mounted police, to protect the squatter both from black and white neighbours; and Tom found himself legally the master of an ample run. But his flock was miserably small, and he and his fellows must live. And they did live, but such a life as none but men in the utmost extremities, and with nerves and resolutions of iron, could endure. All their hope was in the increase of their flock; money they had none to purchase more; and sheep then were excessively dear, for the demand to supply a whole new country was immense. To spare the flock, they lived chiefly on tea and damper, a heavy unleavened cake, and never indulged themselves in the taste of meat except when the wild dogs had destroyed and left some of their sheep on the ground.

These wild dogs were a terrible and incessant nuisance. For ages unmolested by the natives, they

had increased into myriads, and nightly came down on the folds in crowds. As yet the grand blessing of the squatters, strychnine, which has now reduced the destructive troops of these animals to an insignificant number, was unknown; and daily and nightly it was a constant stretch of watching and anxiety to preserve his little remnant of a flock from their jaws. Sun and rain, the cold — intensely cold — nights of that otherwise fine climate, had to be constantly endured by Scott and his companions, and told in woful cramps and rheumatisms on their frames.

Still the flocks grew and multiplied wonderfully, almost doubling themselves every year; and in four years the flock had actually augmented itself into the number of two thousand. Tom had fetched over his wife and children, having previously built them a hut, and, encouraged by his wife's cheerful spirit and unfailing sympathy, Tom looked forward to some day when sheep should be worth something, and repay all his cares. But sheep multiplied, and the population did not multiply in proportion. Wool was low, and there was no demand for mutton. Tom had to pay his hard money, that is, so much per head for his sheep and cattle, to pay for stores from Melbourne, to purchase a dray and a bullock-team, and wool-bags. Yet his flocks still wonderfully increased.

People began, in 'thirty-nine and 'forty, to flock over to the colony, and a bright future seemed to dawn. It was a delusive one. Lord John Russell's order that no colonial land should be sold at less than one pound per acre arrived; immigration stopped short at once, as at the command of an evil genius; and the squatters gazed in consternation on their wonderfully multiplying flocks, which were thus absolutely reduced to no value at all. In eighteen hundred and forty-two came the crash of ruin on the land, and sheep were valued at a shilling a head.

Meantime, Tom Scott had had to pay heavily for labour in splitting slabs and shingles for his wool-shed, for the fences of his paddocks, for plough, harrow, hurdles, and watch-boxes; for stores, stockyard-fences, milking-bail, calf-pen, garden-fencing, and planting, and heaven knows what besides; for all which a huge balance had run up against him at his merchant's, in Melbourne, spite of his wool sent down, which seemed, indeed, swallowed up as nothing; while sixteen per cent. interest, which was charged on all the balance, and had been growing like a foul monster from year to year, stood there against him, in the books of Davy Macleod, as a most formidable something.

In eighteen hundred and forty-three, you would have said, had you looked on Tom Scott's station,

that he was a flourishing and a happy man. He had come thither with something less than two hundred sheep, and now they numbered eight thousand! Four shepherds regularly watched as many flocks, at four different huts, on the noble run, which included hills and woods, emerald meadows and beautiful uplands—an estate befitting a prince. But if you looked on Tom himself, the delusion vanished. That clean-built, clever-looking fellow, with that fair and good-souled countenance, had shrunk into an old man. Not seven, but seventy years, seemed to have settled on him. His face was withered, his head was bald, his body stooped; his bony and knotted fingers clasped a stout staff, which enabled him to drag along a pair of legs that stooped feebly at the knees; and feet that seemed too large for the man, and were shrouded in shoes slit and slashed, to give ease to their rheumatic deformity. That was the work of outward exposure, and the inward drag of a monstrous oppression. Care, and the fear that kills, had done their work, as well, or rather worse, than the elements. Tom Scott was actually perishing of past adversity and present abundance. His flocks had flourished and grown till they had positively annihilated their own value.

That year, douce Davy Macleod sent him word that the balance against him, on his books, was seven

hundred pounds. That his eight thousand sheep, at one shilling each, reached to the value of four hundred pounds; that the colony was ruined for ever, and that, therefore, his hut and few other traps must be thrown in, the station made over to the said unfortunate Davy; and he must endeavour to content himself with a bad bargain.

Behold poor Tom Scott suddenly reduced, after all his years of enormous exertions and incredible sufferings, from a squatter to a mere overseer! In the midst of a flock of eight thousand sheep, and on an estate of a beauty and extent worthy of the best prince that ever lived, a pauper and a cripple. Old in comparative youth; destitute in the midst of abundance; a ruined man in fortune, frame, and mind. Poor Ben Brock, one of his faithful companions, had long ago wandered away in that strange kind of insanity which attacks the lonely shepherd of the lonely Australian woods. The waddie of the native had destroyed the equilibrium of his brain. Kitson still lived, hale, faithful, and gloomy.

For three years poor Scott continued to manage the station of the *soi-disant* unfortunate David Macleod, who, absorbed in raking together, from the wrecks of his neighbours' fortunes, in the great commercial tempest that had passed over the colony,

good pennyworths, had never come up to look at his bargain on the Loddon. Besides, David had not ventured to journey so far up into the wilderness. He possessed all the prudence of his nation; and there had been awful rumours of the doings of the natives.

At first, as in all new countries, these natives had been friendly, and inclined to rejoice in the presence of the white fellow, in his mutton, his brandy, and his blankets; but deep and shameful outrages on the part of numbers of low and sensual wretches, who, in one character or other, spread themselves over the country, produced their invariable effects; and then came vengeance and retaliation. The flocks were attacked and massacred; the homes of the squatters were fired, and their families destroyed. The native knew nothing of the principle of property. To him, the white man's kangaroo (the sheep) was as much the free growth of the woods as his own. The white man preyed on his kangaroo, and he preyed on the white man's. The white man injured him, and he speared the white man. But the squatters soon mustered their steeds, collected in bands, and pursued the natives with the deadly onslaught of fire-arms. The natives repaid the murderers' visits in stealth, and perpetrated deeds of horror on

unprotected women and children, in the absence of the men. Thus, returning from one of these commandoes, Tom Scott, who could still mount black Peggy, and forget his pains in his indignation at the cruelties of the blacks, found one day his hut burnt to the ground, and the bodies of his wife and children buried in the ashes.

Like Logan, the American chief, no drop of his blood now flowed in the veins of any living thing, and giving a dreadful curse to the spot of such year-long disappointments, and of such a tragedy, he plunged into the woods, followed by the faithful Kitson, and disappeared. That was the fortune of the old squatter: the original pioneer of the wilderness, one of the forerunners of the present great Australian race of pastoral magnates, one of the founders of the present magnificent trade in wool. But Tom Scott was no solitary victim: he was only one of a thousand. The same causes swept off the majority of the same class of men. Some yielded sooner, and some later, to the irresistible momentum of adverse circumstances; but small was the remnant which escaped altogether. Theirs was the fate of the first heralds of human progress, and the whole victim race of discoverers, inventors, and projectors, the advanced guard and the forlorn hope of the army

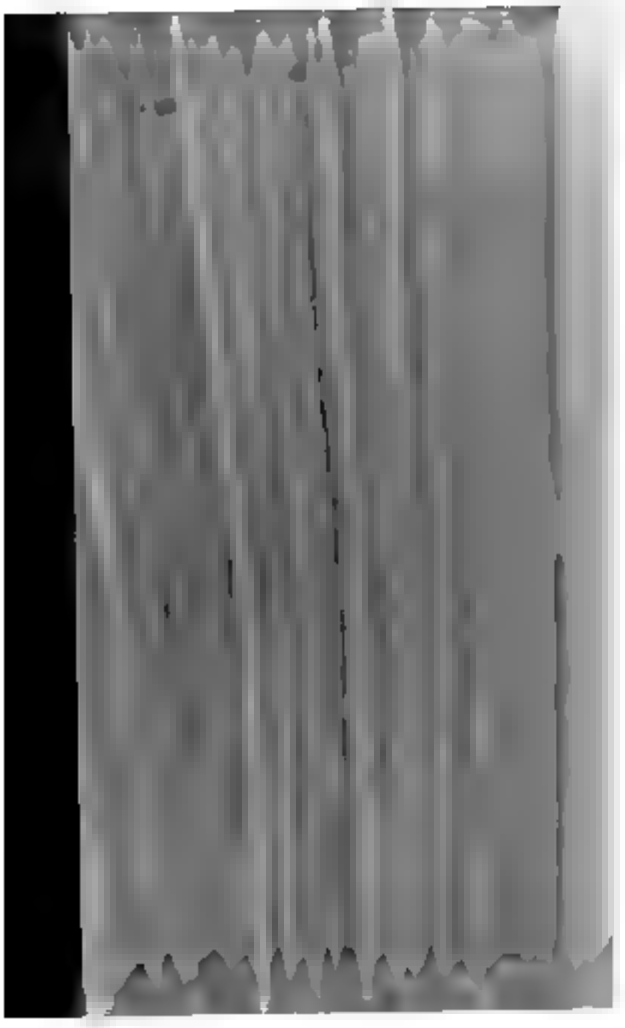
of the world's destiny. They laboured, and others have entered into their labours, lay claim to their honours, and put forward marvellous demands on the strength of their misfortunes. Thy poverty, poor Tom Scot, has evoked the affluence of the sleek and prudent Davy Macleod. The racking of thy sinews, and the aching of thy bones, have smoothed his pillow; thy pains are his pleasures; thy battles have produced his peace; thy watchings his sleep; thy drenchings in the midnight forests his dryness of lodging. On every pang, and grief, and care of thine, he has built his present heaven; and the last blast of desolation that laid prostrate in the burning ashes all that the world held dear to thee, is the grand godsend to him, on which he boldly asks that the rewards of his country shall be added to his already unwieldy affluence.

We will look a little nearer at this wondrous son of fortune, this great lord of the antipodes, this man of many merits — the New Squatter.

Whilst Grayson was relating the history of poor Tom Gordon, vehement was the desire of Messrs. Quarrier and Docker to break in and comment, and

correct, and annotate, but the Messrs. Thompson and Owen cried, "Hear! hear! order, order!" and Grayson gravely insisted on no interruptions till he had done. When he had concluded this portion of the history, he knocked out the ashes from his pipe, took a good draught of cold tea, and saying, "the rest to-morrow, my friends," walked composedly out, taking no note of the loud voices and comments of Quarrier, Docker, and Co., or the rejoinders of the orators of the diggings. Loud and strong was the discussion which followed, however, at which he gravely smiled to himself as he took another pipe under the veranda outside, and appeared to contemplate the grand constellations of Orion and the Southern Cross. Having finished his contemplations and his pipe, he retired to a distant room, and plunged into the arms of Morpheus out of those of Narcotine, still smiling at the storm he had raised, and which went on, roaring as loudly as ever till after midnight.

The next evening he took his accustomed seat in the barrack-room, amid the lowering or the expectant looks of the fiery debaters of the last night, and whilst he gently pulled the ear of a huge kangaroo hound which lay near him with one hand, and gently



"Gentlemen, I now give
table history of poor T
censor."

CHAP. XVII.

THE NEW SQUATTER.

In the Gallowgate of Glasgow many years ago, a crowd one evening was collected round the entrance to a narrow wynd, at which stood a shabby sort of hired carriage, to which was harnessed a lean, bow-kneed, spavined jade of a horse. The crowd was composed of the very poorest and dirtiest portion of the very poorest and dirtiest of "the auld town" population. The occasion which had drawn this respectable assembly to that spot, at that hour of six o'clock, was no other than a wedding, the amiable actors in which public spectacle had to issue from that little smutty passage. What circumstances beyond the perpetual and universal interest which attaches to such an event, drew this crowd, and riveted its eyes in evident intensity on that murky outlet, it never was our felicity to learn, for there were certain influential characters on the outskirts of the throng who maintained a most effectual guard

against any curious intrusion by people in clean linen. These were a squad of lively urchins, who, with bandy-sticks, were amusing themselves in a sham game by striking up the Styx-black fluid of the open kennel against the members of the expectant mass, which was too deeply absorbed in watching for the advent of the happy couple, to notice the sable and odoriferous sprinkling, or too indifferent to regard it.

But not so indifferent was a rosy, full-bodied, and apparently choleric old gentleman, who, while carefully endeavouring to escape any share in this Stygian baptism, by taking a considerable circuit round the mob, received a flying and liberal salute on his cheek, his snow-white cravat, and his sleek and velvety broad-cloth. With a sudden clutch and flaming visage he had seized in the next moment a remarkably shabby lad by the collar, and while giving him sundry vigorous shakes and cuffs, exclaimed, "Ye daft, feckless, mislear't callant, ha'e ye naething better to mind than to spulzie a' decent bodies claes that gae by?"

The lad looked up in his face astonished, and said, "Naething ava, sir."

"Naething! — naething!" said the old gentleman; "come to me the morn's morn, to me, Baillie Glas

the Trongate, and I'll gie ye some wark, ye lpie, ye."

The next day the lad was busy with a clean white pron before him, sweeping out the shop of the emient grocer and baillie, Sandieman Glas, and grinding t the pepper-mill. Anon, he was behind the counter, non, mounted upon a high stool in the counting-ouse behind the shop, and five years afterwards was out of his apprenticeship, and off to London with a letter of recommendation to an eminent Scotch house in the sugar-trade in Eastcheap. David Macleod, for it was no other, was one of those corks, that if you will only fling them into the world's waters anywhere, will float away to the world's end. No storm can sink them for more than a minute; they are sure to bob up again, and go swimming and dimpling forward, through fair and foul.

David did not stay long in London. Some brilliant chance, as he thought, lured him out to the Cape; from the Cape to Sydney, from Sydney to Van Diemen's Land, and, finally, he turned up in the right nick of time in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, as a small grocer and dealer in sundries. Here David plodded on, as it appeared, for some time, in profound obscurity. Nobody seemed to know nor cared to know the rather uncouth, slow, Scotch bodie, that

hung cocoa-nut mats at his door, and tied up old-fashioned conical pounds of sugar, at a very small counter, in a very small shop, elbowed up by all sorts of miscellaneous articles—soap, candles, besoms, bags of very brown sugar, drums of figs, and Bath bricks. But David's obscurity was like the mole's; though little observed, it was onwards, and people were presently astonished by David's purchasing a great warehouse in Market Square, and standing forth in great prominence in the wholesale line. Many a heavy-loaded bullock-dray was seen to leave his ample warehouse door, and direct its course up the country. As time advanced, many a squatter stood deep in David's books, and when the evil day came that shook the colony to its yet but loosely-laid foundations, many were the wonderings and the queries how it could stand with the man whose beginnings were remembered to have been a few years ago so little and obscure.

But David was one of those men who, in building the fabrics of their fortune, knock their bricks well down into their mortar, and make every nail and screw fast as they go on. Squatters fell before the blast, and owed David large sums, but he was found to have taken secure liens on their stock and stations, and, cork-like, he floated on even more buoyantly

than before. True, David pulled a fearful long face, shook portentously his head, and bemoaned himself dolefully, as the most unfortunate of men. All these dead, useless, worthless properties falling upon his hands! What was to become of him? The colony ruined, ruined for ever, gone out and cut, and past redemption; his money all gone; his good hard-earned money; and what to show for it? Heaps of good-for-nothing sheep, that would not pay for shepherds at twenty pounds a-year each, and rations, tea, and sugar, and flour,—heaven help us! and wool just no price at all! and the flocks all eaten up with scab, and foot-rot, and catarrh! Was he to run from Dan to Beersheba, from Gippsland to the Wimmera, after them, to see them dressed, and washed, and clipped, or to trust them to overseers, expensive fellows at forty pounds a-year, and their keep? Goodness guide us! it was enough to craze the strongest head in Christendom. Was he to be the Atlas of the South, and carry the whole country on his back? Was one man to bear up under a pile of burdens, each single one of which had sunk its man, and all better men than himself?

Yet David did manage to bear up under it all; to bear up, ay, and to float gallantly onward too, bobbing and nodding, though solemnly, to all that passed

him on the stream. David knew very well that it was one thing for a man to be crushed that was already struggling under a burden of years, and under the high pressure of sixteen and twenty per cent. interest, and another for a substantial man to "wait a wee," for better times, with flocks and herds grazing by thousands on lands that paid a mere nominal rent. That what was obtained for almost nothing could not well get less. Nay, David had most comfortable inward inklings that things were very likely to grow rather than to diminish. He had profound faith in the old saw that when things are come to the worst, they begin to mend. And now at the worst they assuredly were; so this was the turning point—the cold hour before dawn. Come the worst that might, his stations, and herds and flocks, would balance themselves in his ledger, at least half the cost of purchase being his sixteen per cent. interest. Come good times, and David was a millionaire!

And very soon the soundness of David's reasonings began to show themselves. Wool was evidently on the advance in the market, and Australian wool growing in favour. Next came a wonderful rumour of a mode of turning the overgrown flocks into tallow, by which sheep bought at one shilling would

realise ten! David sat down and calculated, and rose up and rubbed his hands. "All right!" said David, when he had shut the door. "Thirty thousand sheep at a shilling—fifteen hundred pounds; thirty thousand at ten shillings—fifteen thousand pounds! Good!" And then all the cattle and horses, and the good-will of the stations under these improved circumstances!

David had much ado to force down the mighty exultation, and keep it out of sight. Keep it down in the lowest corner of his heart, and keep down the corners of his mouth, with their established demure melancholy. Several of the squatters who had thought themselves ruined came, and suggested that David should now amply repay himself out of their flocks, and restore the overplus to them. But David stood astonished at such ingratitude. "What! when he had so nobly stepped in to save them! when he had relieved them from all their embarrassments—rescued them from bankruptcy, snatched them from the jaws of ruin, and left them to begin the world anew; he could not have thought human nature half so bad. But they were not children—these matters were too serious for child's play." In fact, David had made all fast, and he bowed them

out. Where would be speculation, indeed—of what benefit carefulness and higher sagacity, if men were thus to be expected to give up their just rewards?

So, as we have said, David continued to rake amongst the ruins of the Melbourne of eighteen hundred and forty-two, and many a weighty find and precious jewel he dragged up from the mud and débris of the desolating torrent that had passed through it. Many a house, many a piece of land, many a heap of goods did he secure at nominal prices, which anon became literally worth their weight in gold. All these matters comfortably arranged, David set out on a tour of discovery amongst the various stations which had fallen into his hands, and which he averred pulled so heavily at his heartstrings. We shall not follow him in his travels, not having the same interest in the matter. We shall allow him to gloat inwardly and shake his head outwardly at the deep grassy meadows, and luxuriant swamps of Gippsland, where he found hundreds and thousands of splendid cattle feeding and flourishing for his benefit. At the far-stretching plains, and beautiful uplands of the west, where his tens of thousands of sheep grazed at the foot of the picturesque Pyrenees, and clear, dashing streams came down from the hills, reminding him of

those which he had been used to see on his journeys of business for the worthy Baillie Glas, in Perthshire or Ayr. But, as we have sympathised in the fallen fortunes of Tom Scott, we shall just follow the unfortunate David Macleod to the Loddon, to see what sort of a burden that luckless fellow had left upon his hands there.

As David journeyed up the country in a stout-built gig, accompanied by a stout serving man, he internally gladdened his heart at the sight of the rich plains, the green valleys, the wooded hills, and the velvet slopes studded with noble, but thinly-scattered trees. As he rolled along over the hard, solid ground of low hilly ranges which gave him the varied view of forest, glen, and winding stream, with here and there smoke rising up from the chimney of some solitary station, or more solitary stockman's hut, he could not help saying in his heart of hearts—"Fine country! plenty of room for squatters! Plenty of squatters, plenty of squatters' accounts." And then he would fall into a calculation, how many goods each station would need in the year, how many hundred pounds these would cost, and what would be the average profit upon them. Next, he speculated on the weight of wool, and the probable proceeds. All this was so agreeable, that he must have

sung, in the private parlour of his soul, had he known the stanza :—

> "O, pleasant are the green woods,
> Where there's neither suit nor plea,
> But only the wild creatures,
> And many a spreading tree."

But then would come a shock from the wheel against a stump, which would nearly precipitate him over the splash-board, or a plunge into a morass, that would threaten to swallow him up bodily, and on all these occasions he did not keep his feelings to himself, as he did his more agreeable calculations and cognisances. He would denounce bitterly and cruelly the whole country, its bogs, its barren flats, its more sterile hills, its stony tracks, its yawning, precipitous gullies. Was this a country for a Christian! Was this a place for a decent man to waste his years in looking after the effects of broken-down settlers! Was this howling wilderness a country into which a quiet, religious character like himself should have to come, struggling after the wreck of his fortune, trusted—O! thoughtless, too soft-hearted David!—to spendthrifts and ne'er-do-weels. An unco' place, where there was neither church nor chapel, neither prayer nor praise; but swearing bullock-drivers and heathen blacks? A godless country, "Caumel," —turning to his man,—"an awfu', godless country.

Would thou and I were well out of it, and treading the fair pavements of bonny Glasga!"

David had made good use of his squatter's map, and duly each evening he contrived to turn off the track to some comfortable station, where he was hospitably received, and made himself pleasant over a mutton chop, a panikin of bush tea, and a comforting glass of toddy. Before he turned into bed, he had taken care to speer significantly after the growth of the flocks, the prospects of the wool-crop, and before he left next morning, he would contrive to have a peep into the squatter's store-room, where his practised eye ran with a telegraphic rapidity over the various articles which are to be found in that indispensable apartment of a station,—over the stock of shoes, boots, wide-awakes, ready-made clothes of all kinds, sugars, teas, flour, salt, tobacco, rice, spirits, bridles, saddles, and crockery. He would cast a glance at the number and extent of the buildings, and suggest to himself whether he might not calculate on an extensive order for Tasmanian shingles. How the squatter was off for drays, or bullock-yokes, chains, or hobbles. What sort of a wool-press he was in possession of. Whether he had one of the newest construction, or still continued to fill his bags by means of the old contrivance of a huge beam

balanced on a post, and weighted at the condensing end with a huge piece of rock. Nothing escaped the lynx eye and the capacious soul of David the deeply cogitating; and thus he went on his way most profitably observant, with a grumble, ever and anon, for the ear of Perdy, and a Eureka! to himself.

As he drew near his own station, the station of the umquhile Tom Scott, his heart beat stronger and more pleasurably, for the country grew ever more and more delectable. The valleys were as rich as those of the Land of Goshen; most charming slopes and swells descended from the woods, which would have fascinated the eye of a painter, and were most agreeable to that of David, because they grew delicious grass. Now, they ascended hills covered with giant trees, and fragrant with the blossom of shrubs; now, they descended from the silent and stony regions of the forest, and saw around them hills and rocks thrown up in all the prodigal wild beauty of Nature's most original moments. Here the poet's eye would have seen the future shaping itself with cottages and granges, with all their hanging gardens, and vineyards, their crofts and orchards about them. Cows, and goats, and fowls, appearing on the soft meadow flats, or clambering to the most airy pinnacles of cliff. Down they went, and issued

into a valley which made David Macleod rise in the carriage, and spread out his hands in rapture. "Eh, sirs! and whaten a place for the bulls of Bashan and the cattle on a thousand hills!"

In truth, human eye seldom luxuriated on a more superb scene. A magnificent valley extended up and down, far as the eye could see, deep in grass, yellow with the golden flowers of early summer, in which large herds of cattle were grazing, of a beauty never surpassed, in its free grace and untamed spirit, on the meads of Trinacria or on the Pampas of Brazil. On either side rose wooded hills of manifold heights and forms, whose bluffs and spurs towered breezily in the upper air, or descended, studded with the verdant gracile forms of the shiock and the olive-like light-wood, into the luxuriant vale.

The travellers took a side-way, which led them between these Arcadian declivities and a fair, winding river; from which rose, in vast clouds and with a wild clangour, thousands of wild fowl, which made hasty flight to a distance. Anon they saw the smoke of habitations, and as they drew near, by degrees revealed themselves a variety of wooden buildings. This was the station. It was seated on a mount occupying a natural little amphitheatre midway in

the hills, to which they ascended by an easy winding road. Arrived on the mount, even David Macleod, whose soul dwelt so snug and satisfied in the profitables, could not help being struck with it.

The mount seemed to have been formed, in the old plastic ages, by some huge landslip. Above it impended hills and rocks gashed with deep ravines, and scooped out in green concaves or coombes, and shagged with giant, and in many cases far-projecting masses of the stringy-bark and iron-bark forest. Down one of these came dashing and foaming a little stream, which collected itself in the centre of the mount into a large natural basin, between which and the hills stood the cluster of wooden buildings which constituted the station. Near to the little lake, and facing it, stood forward the chief hut; right and left, and behind, stood others, including stables, cowsheds, kitchen, and stockmen's huts. Around the lake the grass was smooth and green as on an English lawn, and on the sides of the mount lay gardens and vineyards, presenting a most vividly light green contrast to the native foliage around. Beyond the broad valley rose again noble masses of woods; beyond these stretched the unbroken surface of vast forests, over which looked distant ranges of hills, one chain showing over the other; — the near, dark with

clothing woods; the farthest, blending with the azure distance.

It was a seat fit for an emperor. So thought the delighted David; so before him had thought the unfortunate Tom Scott. His was the discovery, his the building of these dwellings, the planting out of these gardens, and the fencing in of ample paddocks for corn and hay, and for the security of horses and milch kine, in the sheltered hangers below.

An active young countryman, his overseer, was ready to receive the great man in his bush home. Donald Ferguson had been on the look-out for him for some days, and had a table spread ready for the hungry man, on which the utensils were humble, but the fare was substantial. A haunch of kangaroo, more delicious than any hare, succeeded kangaroo-soup, that would have delightfully astonished the palate of a Lord Mayor, and furnished new topics to the appetising pen of Miss Acton. Wild turkey, black-duck from the river, bronze-winged pigeon (a luxurious substitute for partridge), patties of quince marmalade, preserved peaches and cream, followed in a succession which spoke eloquent eulogiums for the cook; and a dish of early figs, the first produce of the summer, closed the rear with a bottle of port, which the enraptured squatter declared could not be

matched in Melbourne, nor scarcely in Glasga. We say nothing of vegetables, rare in the bush,—green peas, already plentiful; new potatoes; scorzonera-root, worthy to stand on the right-hand of sea-kale; salads, and pickles of mango and green melon. Never was a dinner more to the taste of hungry traveller,—never did one so convincingly proclaim a land of plenty and of dainty delights.

"Where in the world, Donald, did ye discover this paragaun of a cook?" cried the transported squatter.

"He discovered himself," replied Donald. "He walked in one day as we were at our wit's end to find some one to cook our damper and fry our chops."

"And noo you live like the Heir o' Lynn! I'll fear me, thoo, that the chap 'ull be rather extravagant."

"O, no!" replied Donald; "we keep him close to the chop and the cake when we're alone."

"Aweel! this is an orra time, I reckon. But dinna ye ken where the chiel comes frae? Nane but a lord could want the like o' him."

"I believe," said Donald, "he was head cook to some great man, and was just sent over to the other side on a suspicion of poisoning him."

"Poisoning! poisoning his ain maister! An' ye

tuk him in, and dar to eat and drink of his devil's bannoks and bree? Oot wi' him! oot wi' him! or we are a' dead men!"

"Not a bit of it," said Donald smiling; "don't be alarmed; there's no danger. He has cooked for us these two years, and an honester fellow does not live. In fact, he says, and I think so too, the cook that poisoned the great man was his own gormandising and boozing; for he was regularly carried to bed dead drunk every night of his life."

"Weel, weel," said the startled squatter, "there may be something in that; but to me it seems nae-thing mair nor less than a tempting o' Providence."

"We get used to such things here," said Donald; "we can get no women-servants up here, and not easily men; and half our workmen and shepherds, and I must say the best half, are notorious transported thieves and burglars."

"An' ye dar to gang through the woods with these gallows-birds all alone wi' ye, an' nae Christian creature within miles of ye?"

"Just so," added Donald coolly; "we can't help ourselves, and nothing happens."

The great squatter had begun to think the bush not half so pleasant as it appeared over the roast turkey and port; and his alarm was the more in-

creased when, on going to his bed-room, he found neither lock nor latch to his door, and the moon shining through vacancies, between the slabs of which it was built, large enough to put a hand through, much more the muzzle of a gun.

"Donald, my man! Donald!" he shouted; "hoo's this? Nae lock, nae latch, nae stang?"

"Oh, no," said Donald; "we don't want them; there is nothing but a latch to the front door."

This was worse and worse, and the great man, clapping the only thing like a table in the room against the door, and shoving a heavy box against that, resolved to make short work of it in the bush. But, presently, the habitual shrewdness of the man began to operate, and suggesting to him that the inhabitants of the bush knew best, and that all was right, he dropped asleep, and awoke in the beaming morning cured of all his fears, and more delighted with the scene than ever.

The hut in which he lived was but a wooden hut, with a mud floor, and a huge open chimney, on the hearth of which burned a fire just enough to keep hot the kettle, and nothing more; but on the breakfast table there appeared, with the tea and coffee, chops, steaks, roasted wattle-birds, quails, and other dainties.

After breakfast Donald Ferguson rode out with the Squatter to show him something of the run and its stock. But this was no work of a morning like the riding over an English farm. Seven flocks were tended upon it by seven shepherds, each with his different hut and district of pasturage; and, to reach these, they had to ascend lofty hills, thread deep and hidden glens, cross streams, and ride on through woods that appeared endless. Then, again, they came out on plains, or high and extensive downs, where was descried the immense flock rolling along, as it were, over the grassy level like a cloud, or a low fog before the shepherd, always on the move, and grazing as they went. There is something pastorally grand in the idea of these numerous flocks all daily radiating from one central circle of homesteads, and grazing in profound calm through the silent and boundless waste, returning at evening to their resting-place, and so on from day to day, and from year to year, swelling serenely into living expanses of affluence.

David Macleod soon found that it would require weeks to take a survey of his possessions, and he contented himself with finding the fragment explored all orderly and prosperous. Strychnine had now decimated the dingoes, or wild dogs, the squatters had driven back the natives, and a profound peace

brooded over these wild realms of pastoral riches. Readers, lift up your imaginations; spread them out on their broadest pinions, and conceive the squatter ocupying the county of Kent, or Surrey, for his run, at a rate, including license-fee, and head-money, of some fifty pounds a-year, and you form a tolerable idea of the squatter's domain, — a domain which this country so bountifully consigned to him, — and perceive why he should so fervently desire to hold it for ever.

Ever and anon, as he followed the indefatigable Donald, through far-off valleys, where it would require a compass to direct the stranger, a troop of beautiful horses would turn, gaze at them for a moment, and then with flying tails and manes, and snorting nostrils, bound away with a grace of motion, a conscious enthusiasm of freedom and strength, that the steed of the wilderness only displays.

"Whose are those fine horses?" would ask David, and "Yours, sir," was Donald's reply. Ever and anon, a huge herd of wild cattle would run startled at their approach, and, led by a stupendous number of bulls, dash with crashing fury and thundering hoofs through the dark bush of wattle, or the green hop-scrub, and away in the limitless woods. "Whose are these, Donald?" "Yours, sir."

Ever and anon, on some lonely upland, a flock of

kangaroos would turn their tall heads, gaze silently a moment, and leap rapidly away. Anon, thousands of wild fowl rose with a stunning rush and thunder, from a rarely-visited swamp, and myriads of parrots, wild pigeons, and other birds, glanced in the tree-tops, or saluted you with their quaint cries. To David's wondering mind, it appeared like some chapter of romance, like some hidden kingdom reserved for some great prince, and stocked with everything that could enrich the table, fill the purse, and supply the most boundless passion for the chase. He returned to his station an immensely greater man, in his own estimation, than he even was before.

Here, one of these days, he would come and build a castle befitting his own importance, a very palace of the wilderness. Around him he found at some twenty or thirty miles' distance, other aristocrats of the wild. These were, most of them, half-pay officers, medical men, or lawyers, who had found it slow work in Europe, and had just been drawn to Victoria by fame, in the very nick of time, when the crisis had swept away the original race of squatters—the veritable pioneers of the wilderness—and left them their places on the easiest possible terms. These gentlemen's hope and expectation had been, not the achievement of great fortunes, but that of an easy

and care-free life, a rural peace and plenty, and a wider horizon for their children. But a more wondrous fate was in reserve for them. They thought they had bought merely an old lamp, but it was the genuine miracle-machine of Aladdin. They dreamed only of being gentleman-graziers, and they sprung up at once, the lords and princes of a new empire.

Several of these had made a morning ride of thirty or fifty miles to call on their new neighbour; and David felt that they were of a caste, an education, an intelligence, far beyond his own homespun actuality. How was he to put himself on a due footing with them? The upshot of his reflections was, that it could only be—a big, fine house, and a gorgeous equipage.

It was while meditating deeply on these future glories one summer's forenoon, alone in the inner apartment of the hut, that, raising his eyes, he saw a strange and startling figure standing motionless before him. He had heard some one enter, but supposing it the cook, had not even given him a glance. The man, if man it were, stood tall, gaunt, and clad in a rude, coarse, green jacket, ragged and soiled. A belt round his waist showed a brace of large pistols; his left hand held upright as a support, a long gun. On his head was a slouching brown wide-awake, and

an enormous beard buried the lower half of his face. It was a face that seemed shaped to inspire horror; long, bony, and withered; tanned by sun and breeze into a mahogany hue, and from the deep sunken sockets his eyes gleamed fiery, yet still and fixed with a spectral expression on the squatter.

"Who are you?" exclaimed David, "and what is your business?"

"Justice!" said the man, with a singular emphasis.

"Justice! And why came you here? Who has wronged you?"

"You!" retorted the man, and the fire gleamed more fiercely in his eyes, but he moved not a limb, nor a muscle.

"Me! Now, Heaven help me! I never saw you before," said the evidently-alarmed David. He looked hastily round, as if for assistance; but Donald Ferguson was out in the woods, and the cook was in the distant kitchen; if he shouted, he would never hear him. He glanced out of the front window; all was silent and basking without. The sun blazed and glanced on the little lake, and not a living thing seemed to stir. He cast a look out at the side window near him. He could see far down the slope, where lay the shadow of the woods: but all was motionless and soundless as at midnight A feeling

of faintness and desperation came over him; he would have shouted, but the fear of the man's fire-arms kept him silent.

"You never saw me before?" said the uncouth and gloomy figure. "No! this man you never saw. This blasted, withered, cursed, and deformed frame you never saw. It was before the thunder-bolt had fallen on me; before the scourge of misery had consumed me, and the vengeance of blood and massacre had stamped the devil upon me. Then you saw me, then—young, strong, full of hope, happy, though fighting with the frightful odds of life, because there stood precious ones beside me to cheer me on. Then you saw Tom Scott."

"Tom Scott!"

"Yes; Tom Scott. Listen! I am a blighted and blasted tree. In all the world of forests for thousands of leagues round us, there stands no such spectre of the woods as stands here. On me there remains no leaf; in my veins circulates no sap of life. I am rootless, branchless, heartless; and yet I live, and for what? To slay, as mine were slain; to crush, as mine were crushed; to burn, as mine were burnt; and to give a loose to vengeance, because it is the only thing which has flourished with me. I once had kindly — O! most kindly — feelings; tears,

prayers, and deeds of eager devotion for the suffering. I thought that I was born to win my way to success. I believed that a high heart and a clean hand could and would snatch a blessing. But men and a froward luck dragged me down. Except from two honest rude creatures, out of my own family I never received aid or kindness. The world would have me a devil, and it is done. But, David Macleod, what are you? Men say you are religious? Is it religion to take a man's all for a few hundred pounds, when that all may shortly become a prince's heritage? Look round on this lordly scene. Who made this place?"

"God Almighty," said the confounded squatter.

"God and Tom Scott," said the stranger. "God Almighty raised these hills, spread these valleys, planted these everlasting forests, vaulted over them yon glittering sky; and, wherefore? That a canting hypocrite, a craven, demure, and ruthless oppressor, might revel in them, and vaunt himself in them? Tom Scott built these houses, planted these gardens, enclosed these pastures, and raised these flocks and herds from a mere handful to ten thousand; and was that, think you, of no more value than the deficient balance of a paltry hundred or two of pounds?"

The man raised slowly and steadily the long gun from the ground, and lowering its muzzle towards the stupified squatter, said, "David Macleod, one little crooking of my fore-finger, and you are in eternity. In vain will then be all your scraped-up riches, in vain all these lordly woods and hills, in vain all your flocks and herds, your houses, and your parchments. But I lower once more my piece, give one more moment, and say — Justice!"

"As God lives, Tom Scott," cried the terrified man, his eyes almost starting from his head, and his hand put out as if to avert the threatened deed, "I will do all — Help! help! in God's name, help! Murder!" shouted he, suddenly from the side window descrying three horsemen approaching the house; and, darting to the window, which was open, gave one more frantic cry, and sank senseless on the floor.

When the squatter came to himself again, he cried, "Stop him! hold him! for worlds, don't let him escape!"

"Let who escape?" asked two or three voices, amongst which was that of the cook.

"Who! why, Tom Scott, to be sure. He was here this minute; where is he?" and he rushed out to see. Nobody had seen Tom Scott. Since the

day that he disappeared, he had never been seen here nor anywhere near here. His fame, as a merciless pursuer of the natives, was unrivalled; but no one could say that he had seen him anywhere.

David Macleod returned hastily to town. The glory and beauty of his giant estate had departed. The image of Tom Scott reigned there in intensest horror. East and west, throughout the colony, millions of acres spread their bosoms to the sun, with all their hills, woods, waters, and living things, which owned him for master, but David Macleod never approached them; for Tom Scott might be there.

Years went on; wealth rolled in upon him in torrents; and, as if fortune would visit him and his brethren of squatterdom with her wildest wonders, it was discovered that the colony was one great region of gold. Gold was everywhere. Its earth, its rocks, its rivers, were all teeming with gold! Thousands upon thousands rushed from all the ends of the earth to snatch a share in the marvellous booty; and suddenly the value of the squatters' possessions jumped up five and tenfold in value. No longer were boiling-down establishments requisite to keep down the astonishing increase of the flocks, and yield some tolerable return from them. No longer bubbled those huge cauldrons into which the mangled

limbs of whole hecatombs of sheep were thrown daily and hourly, and seethed down for their fat. There were hundreds of thousands of hungry mouths in the colony, ready to consume, and of hands full of strangely-gathered gold to pay liberally for them.

These wanted, moreover, bullocks and horses to draw up provisions to the swarming diggings, and carry down the gold, — to prosecute the incessant traffic in the towns, and the speeding of escorts and eager passengers. Sheep advanced from five shillings to twenty-five per head; oxen from twenty shillings to twenty pounds; horses from five pounds to seventy and a hundred. The amazed squatters stood astonished at their own affluence. Theirs, indeed, was the Midas touch which turned all to gold, without its ancient penalty. David Macleod calculated up his gains. He was now, in one quarter or another, master of fifty thousand sheep, ten thousand cattle, and two thousand horses. In stock on his stations he was actually worth more than a quarter of a million! What a metamorphosis! Can that great senator ever have been the little dirty boy of the Gallowgate kennel? Never in the world's history had there been so fabulous a period, outfabling all fable. The great patriarchs roaming on the vast plains of Mesopotamia, with their

immense flocks, multiplied and prospered by the express favour of heaven, can present no parallel of fortune with the squatters of Victoria; for the patriarchs had no diggings to consume their mutton at sixpence per pound. Each party held their estates on equally cheap tenure, that is, just about for nothing; but the balance of profit was infinitely in favour of the patriarchs of the antipodes.

Job had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and was a marvel of wealth amongst the ovine and bovine magnates of the east; but Job himself would have cut but a sorry figure amongst the wondrous men of the south. Arabia Felix to Australia Felix? — a sandbank to a paradise! Never since the world began — under no régime of a most propitious Providence — had mortal men been thus, without any merit or demerit, forethought or sagacity of their own, so blessed and pressed, loaded and bedded, rained on in deluges, and bolstered with bags of riches. Never again till the world winds up its motley accounts of bankruptcies and beggaries, monied plethora and coffers of Crœsus, destitution and surfeit, will any nation continue to pitchfork such piles of gold-sacks upon a knot of good honest men, astounded at their own greatness.

But no state has its entire exemptions from the shadow with the sun — the Bubbly Jock with the grandeur. As Tom Scott, with his one stern word — Justice! stood suddenly before the startled David Macleod, so with the in-rushing multitude which bought the squatters' mutton, came a new cry for the squatters' land. Those who had gold wanted homes; those who had homes wanted farms. The cry was — Land! land! and the squatters recoiled in terror before it. What! those noble estates, those woods, and mountains, and charming valleys all their own? Those lands yielding millions of sheep at sixpence a pound, and paddocks yielding hay at sixty and one hundred and twenty pounds a ton? Give them up, or any part of them? Reader, if Government gave you the run of the Isle of Thanet to-morrow, would you like to restore it the next day, or next year, or next hundred years? How much less, then, the whole County of York? Believe me, you would cling to it as to dear life. No man could renounce, without a pang, and a bitter one, so glorious a domain, so vast and fascinating a power.

Therefore the squatters hurried into the legislative Council, and, in a serried phalanx of anxiety and indignation, denounced the unreasonable demands of multitudes clamorous for land. Then was raised

a wild cry of "the hated squatters, the injured squatters, the squatters who had raised the flag of enterprise, built the metropolis of Melbourne, created the enormous wool-trade, suffered unheard-of miseries in the bush, driven out the natives, annihilated the dogs, and sold mutton to tribes of famishing men." In vain! From the inexorable Fawkner and O'Shaughnassey came the ominous and repeated echoes of — Tom Scott!

They stripped from the unfortunate squatters the glorious coats of other men's merits, in which they had so comfortably wrapped themselves. True, there had not been many actual Tom Scotts, the story had been more commonplace, but not the less real. As James Montgomery says of the Reformation —

> "Luther, like Phosphor, led the conquering day,
> His meek forerunners waned and pass'd away."

So the early squatters, the real pioneers and sufferers, had, for the most part, passed away, and the present generation were, in a great degree, the easy sons of a most wondrous fortune, who reaped where other men had sowed. Gentlemen amiable, and hospitable, and accomplished, numbers of them, but still, verily, they have had their reward. When they talk of compensation for the loss of land, Fawkner asks, Whose

land? The nation's. For their improvements,—O'Shaughnassey reminds them, that their tenure forbids them to make any, except on the homestead, which they are allowed to purchase, at a proportionate price. When they talk of the injured squatters, the Argus points to their enormous wealth, and to the injured public. When they bemoan themselves as the poor squatters, all the world laughs, and the jolly rogues laugh in their own sleeves.

These are your new squatters, the autocrats of boundless wilds, the most favoured of all Fortune's sons. May they live a thousand years! But may it be still following their flocks in the van of settlement and civilisation. With the sound of advancing millions behind them, with the plough, the hammer, the shuttle, and the railroad, a hum of human activity and happiness, and before them the pleasant wilderness, the calmly-pasturing flock, the wild majestic herd, and the neighing troop of unlimited steeds, till the great continent of Australia shall be the England of the south, traversed by steam, surrounded by busy fleets — vast, populous, mighty, and at peace.

Dire was the war which went on in the bosoms of Messrs. Quarrier and Docker, as this phasis of the

story proceeded, and nothing but the assistance of Messrs. Owen and Thompson, who demanded a fair and full hearing of facts previous to discussion, could have enabled Grayson to go on at all. At length the story ended, and the narrator, leaving the belligerent parties to fight out the merits of the question at large, rose, and without moving a muscle, walked out, relit his meerschaum in the verandah, and once more contemplating the constellations, listened to the roar of the tempest within as a dweller on the seaboard often listens to the roar of the ocean, and hugs the more vividly his own comfort. Long swelled the sounds of contest and of indignant assertion and reply, but he who had raised the hurricane was soundly sleeping in the distant wing of the building.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE MELBOURNE MERCHANT.

THE next evening, when the hour of smoking, often the smoke of battle, had arrived, the learned doctor stepped in, expecting to be assaulted by the vehement sons of squatterdom, but to his agreeable surprise, he heard a well-fed and cozy gold-buyer, Mr. Sam. Tattenhall, who had flourished in the tents of Bendigo, saying, in a jolly and unctuous voice, which fell like oil on stormy waves, "Gentlemen, last night we heard some curious things about the lucky fellows in Melbourne. Now I can tell you a case of that kind in my own family. It's all true, and need offend nobody. It is the story of

THE MELBOURNE MERCHANT.

My brother Uriah rang at his gate at his snug retreat of Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, near London, exactly at a quarter to six—his regular hour —when the omnibus from the city set him down at

the end of the lane. It was December, but the weather was fine and frosty, and as it was within a few days of Christmas, his children—four in number—two boys, just come home from school, and two girls, who came home from school every day—were all on the alert to receive him, with a world of schemes for the delectation of the coming holiday-time.

My brother Uriah was an especial family-man. He made himself the companion and play-fellow of his children on all occasions that his devotion to his business in the city would admit of. His hearty, cheery voice was heard as he entered the hall, and while he was busy pulling off his over-coat, and hanging up his hat: "Well, my boys; well, George; well, Miss Lucy, there. What are you all about? How's the world used you since this morning? Where's mamma? The kettle boiling, eh?" The running fire of hilarity that always animated him seemed to throw sunshine and a new life into the house, when he came in. The children this evening rushed out into the hall, and crowded round him with such a number of "I say, pa's," and "Do you know, pa?" and "Don't tell him now, Mary,—let him guess. Oh! you'll never guess, pa!" that he could only hurry them all into the sitting-room before him like a little flock of sheep, saying, "Well, well, you

rogues,—well, well,—let us have some tea, and then all about it."

The fire blazed bonnily, as it was wont, in the bright grate, and that and the candles made the room, with light and warmth, the very paradise of comfort. Mrs. Tattenhall, a handsome woman of five and thirty or so—she might be more, but she did not look it—was just in the act of pouring the water from a very bright little kettle into the equally bright silver tea-pot, and with a sunny, rosy, youthful, and yet matronly face, turned smilingly at his entrance, and said, "Well, dear, is it not a very cold night?"

"Not in this room, certainly, my dear," said my brother Uriah, "and with such a snuggery before one, who cares for cold outside?"

Mrs. Tattenhall gave him a brighter smile still, and the neat Harriet coming in with the toast, the whole family group was speedily seated round the tea-table, and the whole flood of anticipated pleasures and plans of the younger population let loose, and cordially entered into, and widened and improved by my brother Uriah. He promised them an early night at the very best pantomime, and they were to read all about the pantomimes in the newspapers, and find out which was the best. He meant to take them to see all sorts of sights, and right off-hand on

Christmas Eve he was going to set up a Christmas-tree, and have Christkindchen, and all sorts of gifts under it for everybody. He had got it already done by a German who came often to his warehouse, and it was somewhere, not far off just now.

"Thank you, papa,—thank you a thousand times. Oh! what heaps of fun!" exclaimed the children, altogether.

"Why, really, my dear," said Mrs. Tattenhall, delighted as the children, "what has come to you? You quite outdo yourself, good as you always are. You are quite magnificent in your projects."

"To be sure," said Uriah, taking hold of the hands of little Lucy, and dancing round the room with her. "To be sure; we may just as well be merry as sad; it will be all the same a hundred years hence."

Presently the tea-table was cleared, and, as they drew round the fire, my brother Uriah pulled out a book, and said, "George, there's a nice book—begin and read it aloud: it will be a very pleasant book for these winter evenings before all the dissipation begins. It is Pringle's Adventures in South Africa, and is almost as good as Robinson Crusoe. I knew Pringle well; a lame, little man, that you never would dream could sit on a horse, much less ride after lions and elephants in that style."

"Lions and elephants!" all were silent, and George read on. He read till eight o'clock, their bed-time, and the whole group—parents and children—were equally delighted with it. As they closed the book —"Now," said the father, "would it not be grand fun to live out there, and ride after the lions and elephants?"

"Ah! grand fun!" said the boys, but the mother and the girls shuddered at the lions. "Well, you could stay in the house, you know," said Bob.

"Right, my fine fellow," said the father, clapping him on the shoulder. "So now off to bed, and dream all about it."

When the children were gone, my brother Uriah stretched out his feet on the fender and fell into a silence. When my brother's silence had lasted some time his wife said, "Are you sleepy, dear?"

"No; never was more wakeful," said Uriah; "really, my dear, I never was less inclined to be sprightly: but it won't do to dash the spirits of the children. Let them enjoy the Christmas as much as they can, they will never be young but once."

"What is amiss?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall, with a quick apprehensive look. "Is there something amiss? Good gracious! you frighten me."

"Why no, there is nothing exactly amiss; there

is nothing new; but the fact is, I have just taken stock, and to-day finished casting all up, and struck the balance."

"And is it bad? Is it less than you expected?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall, fixing her eyes seriously on her husband's face.

"Bad! No, not bad, nor good. I'll tell you what it is. You've heard of a toad in a mud wall. Well, that's me. Twenty years ago, I went into business with exactly three thousand pounds, and here I have been trading, and fagging, and caring, and getting, and losing, business extending, and profits getting less and less, making large sales, and men breaking directly after, and so the upshot is,—twenty years' trade, and the balance the same to a pound as that I began with. Three thousand I started with, and three thousand is precisely my capital at this moment."

"Is that all?" said Mrs. Tattenhall, wonderfully relieved. "Be thankful, my dear Uriah, that you have three thousand pounds. You have your health wonderfully, we have all our health; we have children, as good and promising children as anybody is blest with, and a happy home, and live as well and comfortably as any one need to do, or as I wish, I am sure. What do we want more?"

"What do we want more?" said Uriah, drawing

up his legs suddenly, and clapping his hands in a positive sort of a way on his knees. "Why, I for one, want a great deal more. We've children, you say, and a home, and all that. Heaven be thanked, so we have! but I want our children to have a home after us. Three thousand pounds divided amongst four, leaves about seven hundred and fifty each. Is it worth while to fag a whole life, and leave them that and a like prospect? No," continued Uriah, in a considering manner, and shaking his head. "No, I want something more; more for myself; more for them; more room, more scope, a wider horizon, and a more proportionate result of a whole human existence. And do you know, Maria, what I have come to as the best conclusion? To go out to Australia."

"To go out to Australia!" said Mrs. Tattenhall, in astonishment. "My dear Uriah, you are joking. You mean no such thing."

"But that is just what I do mean," said Uriah, taking his wife's hand affectionately; "I have thought of it long, and the toad-in-the-wall balance has determined me. And now what I ask of you is to look at it calmly and earnestly. You know the Smiths, the Browns, and the Robinsons have gone out. They report the climate delicious, and that

wonders are doing. A new country, if it be a good country, is the place to grow and thrive in, without doubt. Look at the trees in a wood. They grow up and look very fine in the mass. The wood, you say, is a very fine wood; but when you have looked at the individual trees, they are crowded and spindled up. They cannot put out a single bough beyond a certain distance; if they attempt it, their presuming twigs are poked back again by sturdy neighbours all round, that are all struggling for light and space like them. Look then at the tree on the open plain,—how it spreads and hangs in grand amplitude its unobstructed boughs and foliage: a lordly object. Just so, this London. It is a vast, a glorious, a most imposing London, but thousands of its individuals in it are pressed and circumscribed to a few square yards and no more. Give me the open plain,—the new country, and then see if I do not put out a better head, and our children too."

Mrs. Tattenhall, now she felt that her husband was in earnest, sat motionless and confounded. The shock had come too suddenly upon her. Her husband, it is true, had often told her that things did not move as he wished; that they seemed fixed, and stereotyped, and stagnant; but then, when *are* merchants satisfied? She never had entertained an idea

but that they should go on to the end of the chapter as they had been going on ever since she was married. She was bound up heart and soul with her own country; she had her many friends and relations, with whom she lived on the most cordial terms; all her tastes, feelings, and ideas were English and metropolitan. At the very idea of quitting England, and for so new, and so distant a country, she was seized with an indescribable consternation.

"My dear Maria!" said her husband; "mind, I don't ask you to go at first. You and the children can remain here till I have been and seen what the place and prospects are like. My brother Sam will look after business—he will soon be at home in it—and if all is pleasant, why, you will come then, if not, I won't ask you. I'll work out a good round sum myself if possible, or open up some connection that will mend matters here. What can I say more?"

"Nothing, dear Uriah, nothing. But those poor children ——."

"Those poor children!" said Uriah. "Why my dear Maria, if you were to ask them whether they would like a voyage to Australia, to go and see those evergreen woods, and gallop about all amongst gay parrots, and great kangaroos, they would jump off their seats with joy. The spirits of the young are

ever on the wing for adventure and new countries. It is the prompting of that Great Power which has constructed all this marvellous universe, and bade mankind multiply and replenish the earth. Don't trouble yourself about them. You saw how they devoured the adventures at the Cape, and you'll see how they will kindle up in a wonderful enthusiasm at the promise of a voyage to Australia. What are pantomimes to that?"

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Tattenhall. "They know nothing about the reality; all is fairyland and poetry to them."

"The reality! the reality, Maria, will be all fairyland and poetry to them."

Mrs. Tattenhall shook her head, and retired that night—not to sleep, but with a very sad heart to ruminate over this unexpected revelation. My brother's words were realised at the first mention of the project to the children. After the first shock of surprise and doubt whether it were really meant, they became unboundedly delighted. The end of it was, that by the middle of February, my brother Uriah, having had a handsome offer for his business and stock, had wound up all his affairs; and Mrs. Tattenhall having concluded, like a good wife and mother, to go with the whole family, they bade fare-

passengers, for the captain said t
damp on the Australian colonies
Government at home, to raise th
to one pound per acre, had chec
as there had been a good deal of
bourne in town allotments, thin
gloomy. This was in eighteen
three. "But it can't last long
"that silly order of raising the pr
palpably absurd; while America
much nearer at a quarter of the
be repealed; and then all will be

It was in the middle of May
rived in Hobson's Bay. It was
weather—the very opposite to a
had been represented in the acc
but then it was the commencem
November of our season. Uris
sailed up the winding river to
sail was through a flat tract of

tea-tree of that country. On reaching the foot of the town, which stood on a range of low hills, Uriah and his companions stepped out into a most appalling slough of black mud, through which they waded till they reached the town, which was of no great extent, scattered over a considerable space, however, for the number of houses, and with great intervals of woodland, and of places where the trees had been felled, and where the stumps, a yard high, remained in unsightly nakedness.

Uriah walked on through a scene which, somehow in keeping with the weather, fell heavily on his spirits. There was nothing doing, or stirring; houses in various degrees of progress stood as they were. There were piles of timber, lime, shingles, posts, and rails, empty waggons and carts, but no people employed about them. On every hand he saw lots marked out for fencing or building upon, but there they remained, all stationary.

"Is it Sunday?" Uriah asked himself. No, it was Tuesday. Then why all this stagnation — this solitude? In a lane, or rather deep track of mud and ruts, since known as Flinders' Lane, but then without a name, and only just wide enough between the trees for a cart to pass, Uriah wading and plunging along, the rain meantime pouring, stream-

ing, and drumming down on his umbrella, he came face to face with a large active man in a Mackintosh cloak, and an oilskin hood over his head. Neither of them found it very convenient to step out of the middle mud track, because on each side of it rose a perfect bank of sludge raised by the wheels of drays; and stopping to have a look at each other, the strange man suddenly put out a huge red hand, warm and wet, and exclaimed:

"What! Tattenhall! You here! In the name of all wonders, what could bring you here at this moment?"

"What, Robinson! is that you?" cried Uriah. "Is this your climate? This your paradise?"

"Climate—paradise—be hanged!" said Robinson. "They're well enough. If everything else were as well there would be nought to complain of. But tell me, Uriah Tattenhall, with that comfortable Trumpington Cottage at Peckham, with that well-to-do warehouse in the Old Jewry, what could possess you to come here?"

"What should I come for, but to settle?" asked Uriah, somewhat chagrined at this salutation.

"To settle! ha, ha!" burst out Robinson. "Well, as for that, you could not come to a better place. It is a regular settler here. Everything and every-

body are settled here out and out. This is a settlement, and no mistake; but it is like a many other settlements, the figures are all on the wrong side of the ledger."

"Good gracious!" said Uriah.

"Nay, it is neither good nor gracious," replied Robinson. "Look round. What do you see? Ruin, desertion, dirt, and the—devil!"

"Why, how is that?" asked Uriah. "I thought you, and Jones, and Brown, and all of you had made your fortunes."

"So we had, or were just on the point of doing. We had purchased lots of land for building, and had sold it out again at five hundred per cent., when chop! down comes little Lord John with his pound an acre, and heigh, presto! everything goes topsy-turvy. Our purchasers are either in the bankruptcy court, or have vanished. By jingo! I could show you such lots, fine lots for houses and gardens, for shops and warehouses; ay, and shops and warehouses upon them too, as would astonish you."

"Well, and what then?" asked Uriah.

"What then! Why, man, don't you comprehend? Emigration is stopped; broken off as short as a pipe-shank; not a soul is coming out to buy and live in all these houses; not a soul, except an odd—excuse

me, Tattenhall—I was going to say, except you and another fool or two. But where do you hang out? Look! there is my house," pointing to a wooden erection near. "I'll come and see you as soon as I know where you fix yourself."

"But mind one thing," cried Uriah, seizing him by the arm as he passed. "For Heaven's sake, don't talk in this manner to my wife. It would kill her."

"Oh, no—mum's the word! There's no use frightening the women," said Robinson. "No, confound it, I won't croak, anyhow; and, after all, bad as things are, why they can't remain so for ever. Nothing ever does; that's one comfort. They'll mend sometime."

"When?" said Uriah.

"Well," said Robinson, pausing a little, "not before you and I meet again, so I may leave that answer to another opportunity;" and with a nod and very knowing look he stalked on.

"Odd fellow!" said my brother Uriah. "He is very jocose for a ruined man. What is one to think?" and he waded on. After making a considerable circuit, and actually losing himself in the wood somewhere about where the Reverend Mr. Morrison's chapel now stands in Collins' Street, he again came across Robinson, who stood at the door of a con-

siderable erection of wattle-and-dab; that is, a building of boughs wattled on stakes, and dabbed over with mud; then not uncommon in Melbourne, and still common enough in the bush. It stood on the hill-side, with a swift muddy torrent, produced by the rains rushing down the valley below it, towards the river, as it has often done since it bore the name of Swanston Street.

"Here, Tattenhall! here is a pretty go!" shouted Robinson; "a fellow has cut with bag and baggage to-night who owes me four thousand pounds, and has left me a lot more houses and land. That's the way every day. But look—here is a house ready for you. You can't have a better, and you can pay me any trifle you like: something is better than nothing.

He led Uriah in. The house was thoroughly and comfortably furnished, though, of course, very simply, with beds and everything. Uriah, in less than a week, was safely established there, and had time to ramble about with his boys, and learn more fully the condition of the colony. It was melancholy beyond description. Wild, reckless speculation, brought to a sudden close by the cessation of immigration, had gone like a hurricane over the place, and had left nothing but ruin and paralysis behind it. No words that Robinson had used, or that any man could use,

could overpaint the real condition of prostration and of misery. Two hundred and eighty insolvencies in a population of ten thousand, told the tale of awful reality. Uriah was overwhelmed with consternation at the step he had taken. O! how pleasant seemed that Trumpington Cottage, Peckham, and that comfortable warehouse in the Old Jewry, as he viewed them from the Antipodes in the midst of rain and ruin.

What, however, was my brother Uriah's astonishment to see Robinson stalk in the next day, his tall figure having to stoop at every door, and in his brusque, noisy way, go up to Mrs. Tattenhall, and shaking her hand as you would shake the handle of a pump, congratulate her on her arrival in the colony.

"A lucky hit, madam! a most lucky, scientific hit! Ah! trust Tattenhall for knowing what he is about."

Mrs. Tattenhall stood with a singular expression of wonder and bewilderment on her countenance, for the condition of the place, and the condolings of several female neighbours who had dropped in in Uriah's absence, had induced her to believe that they had made a fatal move of it.

"Why, sir," said she, "what can you mean? for

as I hear, the place is utterly ruined, and certainly it looks like it!"

"Ruined! To be sure it is. At least, the people are, more's the pity for me, and the like of me who have lost everything; but for Tattenhall, who has everything to gain, and money to win it with, why it is the golden opportunity, the very thing! If he had watched at all the four corners of the world, and for a hundred years, he could not have dropped into such a chance. Ah! trust Tattenhall! Make me believe he did not plan it," thrusting his knuckles into Uriah's side, and laughing with a thunder-clap of a laugh that seemed to come from lungs of leather.

"Why, look here now," he continued, drawing a chair and seating himself on its front edge; "look here now, if you had come six months ago, you could have bought nothing except out of the fire. Town allotments, land, houses, bread, meat, sugar, everything ten times the natural price; and now, cheap, dog cheap! of no value at all: you might have them for asking for;—nay, I could go into a dozen deserted shops, and take any quantity for nothing. And property! why, three thousand pounds cash would almost buy all the place—all the colony!"

"What is the use," asked Mrs. Tattenhall, "of buying a ruined colony?"

"A ruined colony!" said Robinson, edging himself still more forward in his chair, and seeming actually to sit upon nothing, his huge figure and large ruddy face appearing still larger. "The colony, madam, is not ruined; never was ruined, never can be ruined. The people are ruined, a good lot of them; but the colony is a good and a grand colony. God made the colony, and let me tell you, madam," looking very serious, "Providence is no speculator, up to-day, down to-morrow. What he does he does. Well, the people have ruined themselves; but it is out of their power to ruin the colony; no, nor the town. The town and the colony are sound as a bell; never were sounder; never had more stuff in them; never had so much. There is the land still; not a yard of it is gone; no great fellow has put that on his back and gone off with it. The land is there, and the houses, and the merchandise, and the flocks, and herds, and horses, and—what concerns you—"

He sat and looked at Mrs. Tattenhall, who stood there intently listening, and Uriah stood just behind her listening too, and all the children with their mouths open, gazing on the strange man.

"Well, what—what concerns us?" said Mrs. Tattenhall.

"To get a huge, almighty heap of something for

nothing," said the large man, stretching out his arms in a circular shape, as if he would enclose a whole globe, and in a low, slow, deep tone, calculated to sink deep into the imaginations of the listeners.

"If we did but know when things would mend," said my brother Uriah, for the first time venturing to put in a word.

"When?" said Robinson, starting up so suddenly that his head struck against a beam in the low one-storied house. "Confound these low places," said he, turning fiery red, and rubbing his crown, "there will be better anon. When? say ye? Hark ye! this colony is—how old? Eight years! and in eight years what a town! what wealth! what buildings! what a power of sheep and cattle! The place is knocked down, won't it get up again? Ay, and quickly! Here are a pair of sturdy legs," he said, turning to Bob, who flushed up in surprise; "but, Mrs. Tattenhall, you did not teach him to walk without a few tumbles, eh? But he got up again, and how he stands now! what a sturdy young rogue it is! And what made him get up again? Because he was young and strong, and the colony is young and strong, madam. Eight years old! What shall I give you for a three thousand pounds' purchase made now, three years hence? Just think of that," said the tall man, "just

turn that over a time or two," nodding solemnl
my brother, and then to my sister-in-law, and t
cautiously glancing at the menacing beam, and t
a low duck diving out of the house.

"What a strange fellow!" said Uriah.

"But how true!" said Mrs. Tattenhall.

"How true! What true?" asked Uriah, astonis

"Why," said Mrs. Tattenhall, "what he says.
is truth, Uriah; we must buy as much as we ca

"But," said Uriah, "only the other day he
the clean contrary. He said everybody was ruin

"And he says so still," added Mrs. Tattenl
enthusiastically, "but not the colony. We must b
We must buy, and wait. One day we shall re
grand harvest."

"Ah!" said Uriah; "so you let yourself, my
Maria, be thus easily persuaded, because Robi
wants to sell, and thinks we have money?"

"Is it not common sense, however? Is it not
plainest sense?" asked Mrs. Tattenhall. "Do
think this colony is never to recover?"

"Never is a long while," said Uriah. "
still —"

"Well, we will think it over, and see how
town lies; and where the chief points of it will
probably, hereafter; and if this Mr. Robinson has

land in such places, I would buy of him, because he has given us the first idea of it."

They thought and looked, and the end of it was, that very soon they had bought up land and houses, chiefly from Robinson, to the amount of two thousand pounds. Robinson fain would not have sold, but have mortgaged; and that fact was the most convincing proof that he was sincere in his expectations of a revival. Time went on. Things were more and more hopeless. Uriah, who had nothing else to do, set on and cultivated a garden. He had plenty of garden ground, and his boys helped him, and enjoyed it vastly. As the summer went on, and melons grew ripe, and there were plenty of green peas and vegetables, by the addition of meat, which was now only one penny a pound, they could live almost for nothing; and Uriah thought they could wait and maintain themselves for years, if necessary. So, from time to time, one tale of urgent staring distress or another lured him on to take fresh bargains, till he saw himself almost penniless. Things still remained as dead as the very stones or the stumps around them. My brother Uriah began to feel very melancholy; and Mrs. Tattenhall, who had so strongly advised the wholesale purchase of property, looked very serious. Uriah often thought: "Ah! she *would*

do it; but — Bless her! I will never say so, for she did it for the best." But his boys and girls were growing apace, and made him think. "Bless me! In a few years they will be shooting up into men and women; and if this speculation should turn out all moonshine! — if the place should never revive!"

He sat one day on the stump of a tree on a high ground, looking over the bay. His mind was in the most gloomy, dejected condition. Everything looked dark and hopeless. No evidence of returning life around; no spring in the commercial world; and his good money gone; as he sat thus, his eyes fixed on the distance, his mind sunk in the lowering present, a man came up, and asked him to take his land off his hands: to take it, for heaven's sake, and save his starving family.

"Man!" said Uriah, with a face and a voice so savage that it made the suppliant start even in his misery, "I have no money! I want no land! I have too much land. You shall have it all for as much as will carry me back to England, and set me down a beggar there!"

The man shook his head. "If I had a single crown I would not ask you; but my wife is down of the fever, and my children are dying of dysentery.

What shall I do? and my lots are the very best in the place."

"I tell you!" said my brother Uriah, with a fierce growl, and an angry flash of the eye, "I have no money, and how can I buy?"

He glanced at the man in fury; but a face so full of patient suffering and of sickness — sickness of the heart, of the soul, and, as it were, of famine, met his gaze, that he stopped short, felt a pang of remorse for his anger, and, pointing to a number of bullocks grazing in the valley below, he said, in a softened tone, "Look there! The other day a man told me such a tale of horror — a sick family, and a gaol staring him in the face, that I gave him my last money — my carefully hoarded money, and of what use are those cattle to me? None whatever. You may have them for your land, if you like. I have nothing else."

"I will have them," said the man. "On a distant station I know where I could sell them, if I could only leave my family. But they have no flour, no tea, nothing but meat, meat, meat."

"Leave them to me," said Uriah, feeling the warm blood and the spirit of humanity beginning to circulate in his bosom at the sense of what was really suffering around him. "Leave them to me. I will care for

them. Your wife and children shall have a doctor. I will find you some provisions for your journey, and if ever your land is worth anything, you shall have it again. This state of things makes monsters of us. It turns our blood into gall, our hearts into stones. We must resist it or we are ruined, indeed!"

"Nay," said the man, "I won't impose upon you. Take that piece of land in the valley there; it will one day be valuable."

"That!" said Uriah, looking. "That! Why, that is a swamp! I will take that — I shall not hurt you there!" And he laughed outright, the first time for two years.

Years went on, and my brother Uriah lived on, but as it were in the valley of the shadow of death. It was a melancholy and dispiriting time. The buoyancy of his soul was gone. That jovial, sunny, ebullient spirit with which he used to come home from the city, in England, had fled, as a thing that had never been. He maintained himself chiefly out of his garden. His children were springing up into long, lanky lads and lasses. He educated them himself, as well as he could; and as for clothes! Not a navvy — not a beggar — in the streets of London, but could have stood a comparison with them, to their infinite disparagement. Ah! those good three thousand pounds! How will

the balance stand in my brother Uriah's books at the end of the next twenty years?

But anon there awoke a slight motion in the atmosphere of life. It was a mere flutter of the air, that died out again. Then again it revived — it strengthened — it blew like a breath of life over the whole landscape. Uriah looked around him from the very place where he had sat on the stump in despair. It was bright and sunny. He heard a sound of an axe and a hammer. He looked, and saw a house, that had stood a mere skeleton, once more in progress. There were people passing to and fro with a more active air. What is that? A cart of goods? A dray of building materials. There was life and motion again! The discovery of converting sheep and oxen into tallow had raised the value of stock. The shops and the merchants were once more in action. The man to whom he had sold the oxen came up smiling—

"Things mend, sir. We shall soon be all right. And that piece of land in the swamp, that you were so merry over, will you sell it? It lies near the wharves, and is wanted for warehouses."

"Bravo!" cried Uriah, and they descended the hill together. Part of the land was sold; and soon substantial warehouses, of the native trapstone, were rising upon it. Uriah's old attachment to a merchant's

life came over him. With the purchase-money he built a warehouse too. Labour was extremely low, and he built a large and commodious one.

Another year or two, and behold Uriah busy in his warehouse; his two boys clerking it gravely in the counting-house. Things grew rapidly better. Uriah and his family were once more handsomely clad, handsomely housed, and Uriah's jolly humour was again in the ascendant. Every now and then Robinson came hurrying in, a very busy man indeed he was now, in the town council, and moreover, mayor; and saying, "Well, Mrs. Tattenhall, did n't I say it, eh? Is not this boy of a colony on a fine sturdy pair of legs again? Not down? Not dead? Well, well, Tattenhall did me a kindness, then — by ready cash for my land — I do n't forget it; but I do n't know how I am to make him amends, unless I come and dine with him some day." And he was off again.

Another year or two, and that wonderful crisis, the gold discovery, came. Then, what a sensation — what a stir — what a revolution! what running, and buying, and bidding for land, for prime business situations! — what rolling in of people — capital — goods. Heaven and earth! — what a scene — what a place — what a people!

Ten years to a day from the last balance at the

Old Jewry, Uriah Tattenhall balanced again, and his three thousand pounds was grown to seventy thousand pounds, and was still rolling up and on like a snow-ball.

There were George and Bob grown into really tall and handsome fellows. George was the able merchant, Bob had got a station out at the Dandenong Hills, and told wonderful stories of riding after kangaroos, and wild bulls, and shooting splendid lyre-birds—all of which came of reading "Pringle's Life in South Africa." There were Mary and Lucy, two handsome girls as any in the colony, and wonderfully attractive to a young Benson and a younger Robinson. Wonders was the next year to bring forth, and amongst them was to be a grand pic-nic at Bob's station, at the Dandenong, in which they were to live out in real tents in the forest, and cook, and bake, and brew, and the ladies were to join in a bull-hunt, and shoot with revolvers, and nobody was to be hurt, or thrown, or anything to happen, but all sorts of merriment and wild-wood life.

And really my brother's villa on the Yarra River is a very fine place. The house is an Italian villa, built of real stone, ample, with large, airy rooms, a broad verandah, and all in the purest taste. It stands on a high bank above the valley, in which the Yarra

winds, taking a sweep there, its course marked by a dense body of acacia trees. In the spring these trees are of resplendent gold, loading the air with their perfume. Now they were thick and dark in their foliage, casting their shade on the river deep between its banks. From the house the view presented this deep valley with this curving track of trees, and beyond, slopes divided into little farms, with their little homesteads upon them, where Uriah had a number of tenants making their fortunes on some thirty or forty acres each, by hay at forty pounds a ton, and potatoes and onions at one shilling a pound, and all other produce in proportion.

On this side of the river you saw extensive gardens in the hollow, blooming with roses and many tropical flowers, and along the hill sides, on either hand, vineyards and fruit orchards of the most vigorous vegetation, and loaded with young fruit. The party assembled at my brother Uriah's house on that hospitable Christmas Day, descended amid a native shrubbery, and Uriah thrust a walking-stick to its very handle into the rich black soil, and when his friends expressed their surprise, he told them that the soil there was fourteen feet deep, and would grow any quantity of produce for ages without manuring. Indeed, they passed through green corn of the most

.uxuriant character, and, crossing the bridge of a brook which there fell into the river, they found themselves under the acacias. By the river side there lay huge prostrate trunks of ancient gum-trees, the patriarchs of the forest, which had fallen and given place to the acacia, and now reminded the spectators that they were still in the land of primitive woods.

"Why, Tattenhall," said Robinson to my brother Uriah, "Trumpington Cottage, my dear fellow, would cut a poor figure after this. I'd ask any lord or gentleman to show me a fertiler or more desirable place in the tight little island. Bigger houses there may be, and are, but not to my mind more desirable. Do you know, very large houses always seem to me a sort of asylums for supernumerary servants; the master can only occupy a corner there; he cuts out quite small in the bulk; and as to fertility, this beats Battersea Fields and Fulham hollow. Those market-gardeners might plant and plant to all eternity, always taking out and never putting in; and if they could grow peaches, apricots, grapes, figs twice a-year, and all that, as fine in the open air as they do in hot-houses, and sell their bunches of parsley at sixpence a-piece, and water-melons—gathered from any gravel heap or dry open field—at five shillings a-piece,

plentiful as pumpkins, would n
selves!"

"But what makes you call t
continued Robinson, breaking
bough to whisk the flies from
named his Abbotsford—that's l
man; and we've got Cremorn
mond, and Hawthorne, and
names about here;—but Bow
out."

"You can't?" said Uriah, (
see that the river curves in a b
place?"

"O! that's it," said Robins
to remind you of Bow bells."

"There you have it," said B
bells! But, as there was a b
father put a stead to it; that
you know."

"Bless me!" said Robinson
have thought of that—how ve

And he took the joke in s
that all burst into a simultan
one else knew that it was s
Maria Bowstead, now the univ
Tattenhall.

The whole party were very merry, for they had good cause to be. Mr. and Mrs. Tattenhall, still in their prime, spread out, enlarged every way, in body and estate, rosy, handsomely dressed, beheld around them nothing but prosperity. A paradise of their own, in which they saw their children already developed into that manly and feminine beauty so conspicuous in our kindred of the south; their children already taking root in the land, and twining their branches amongst those of other opulent families, and they felt the full truth of Robinson's rude salutation, as he exclaimed, on coming to a fresh and more striking view of the house and grounds,—

"Ah! Tattenhall! Tattenhall!" giving him one of his jocose pokes in the side, "did n't I say you knew very well what you were about when you came here, eh? Mrs. Tattenhall, ma'am? Who said it? Robinson, was n't it, eh?"

When they returned to the house, and had taken tea in a large tent on the lawn, and the young people had played a lively game of romps or bo-peep amongst the bushes of the shrubbery, with much laughter, the great drawing-room was lighted up, and very soon there were heard the sounds of violins and dancing feet. My brother Uriah and his wife were at that moment sitting under the verandah,

enjoying the fresh evening air, the scent
trees and flowers which stole silently th
twilight, and the clear, deep blue of the s
the magnificent constellations of Orion and
pion were growing momentarily into their
turnal splendour. As the music broke
brother Uriah affectionately pressed the h
wife, faithful and wise, and encouraging th
times of their difficulty and depression,
"Thank God for all this!" The pressu
affectionately and gratefully returned.
brother and his wife rose up, and passe
blaze of light which surrounded the gay an
company within.

"Come now," said Quarrier, "that's
story and raises no bad feelings." "You s
rejoined Parson Docker; "give us the sun
life, I like that. But now a word from me
stand up for my cloth, though people say I
always done it. Well, there's the more
then. There's been a great deal said lat
heathenism of this colony. Good people,
Scotch people in particular, say you may

the Dan to the Beersheba of this colony, that is, I expect, from the Glenelg to the Murray Punt at Albury, and you shall scarcely find a parson, except one or two on the Diggings. That Sunday is just no Sunday, bullock-driving, shepherding, just going forward on Sundays as on week-days, scarcely a church to be seen, scarcely a clergyman to be met with. Well, if it be too true, I for one think it will mend by and by, and I'll tell you why, by telling you what I saw the other day at the Buckland where I went to sell some sheep—sold 'em badly too, but that's not the thing,—what I am going to tell you is the story of the Apostle of the Wilderness."

CHAP. XIX.

THE APOSTLE OF THE WILDERNESS.

"In a new colony the institutions and ordinances religion follow often at a long distance the sett ment of its population. Men who emigrate are m frequently driven out, not by religious persecuti as were the Puritans to America, but by the pr sure of temporal existence, or the ambition wh finds itself without a field at home. Men eager possession of new lands, for securing ample s noble homesteads while the choice is easy, rush and spread themselves with avidity over wide remote spaces. Their souls are intent on seizing advantages of a fresh life, and they leave the ca of a future world to a future day. There may here and there an isolated man who is weary of struggle and restless career of European life; longs for repose, and dreams of a still, poetic, A dian existence in new regions, amid woods and off mountains, but such men are few. The bull

of such as are impatient to plunge into new speculations and rivalries; who are calculating on fresh activities, on a new and impetuous race for great prizes, and who bring with them all the agitated passions and fierce competition of crowded Europe. The scene is but changed, the spirit and the impulses of life are the same. There are the same exhibitions of human character as at home; the same jostlings and heartburnings; the same graspings and contrivings and forestallings, and the spirit of avarice, ambition, petty pride, and selfish clutching at personal importance stands, if either, more nakedly prominent in all its hideous features in the wilderness than in the life-gorged nations of the old world.

To tame and reclaim these feverish sons of Mammon, anon there follow the ministers of a higher principle; the men who, in the pauses of the hubbub of mundane colonization, point their neighbours to still ampler lands, to fresh untrodden worlds beyond the mountains of eternity, and to a peace which even the serenest wilderness of earth does not yield, and for which the most sinewy backwoodsman at length sighs prayerfully.

But in this supply of religious ministration, the peculiar circumstances of Australia have placed it at a far greater disadvantage than most new countries.

Men here have become graziers and bucolic anchorets. They have sat down at wide distances from each other with their flocks and herds, and the enormous woods seem to have swallowed them up. Few or no villages or towns in the interior have sprung up, as in more agricultural countries. There has been, therefore, over a vast extent of Australia, no possible means of maintaining ministers of religion amongst the rural population. There are no means of bringing any number of them into one spot. At the very stations of the squatters, that principle of dispersion which drove the masters apart from each other, drove the men equally so on each individual run. The solitary shepherds follow their flocks in districts of the bush far from each other; the stockman rides through solitary hills, reconnoitring his cattle all alone. Neither flock nor herd could be left by their protectors, while they seek the distant house of prayer. Consequently over enormous tracts of wild country there have been and there are no houses of prayer. It is too true, I admit, that you travel hundreds of miles and see no spire of the very simplest construction rising amongst the trees; you have no Sabbath bell calling you to God and to a thousand rushing recollections of home, of youth, of bright, beautiful days, and the living and the dead, who are alike lost

to you. Nay, we have often sought in vain in townships of some date for church or chapel; the old necessity of the bush has grown into a habit. To all outward observation, the country is a pagan country, or less than that, for even the pagan temple exists not. In one we found, not long since, the policeman reading prayers in the little court-house to the few who retained the desire for public worship, for there was no clergyman.

Sunday, therefore, in the bush, is scarcely discernible from any other day. The shepherd must follow his flock; the stockman must ride his rounds; at the home station there may be less active movement, but there is no peculiar evidence of a sabbath. In the diggings which have grown to any great size, you find tents which bear the name of church and chapel, and the diggers are forbidden to work under a penalty of five pounds, but nine tenths never seek the canvas sanctuary. Many of them lie in bed, and take a delicious rest from their six days' severe exertions; others, more active, fell trees and build huts, turn water-courses, if they can, near their tents, for that they do n't call work; and thousands take their guns and away to creek, and lake, and forest, or to the grog-shop, whose attractions are demonstrated by the extraordinary amount of imported spirits; while on

favourite travelling day, for tr
sidered work.

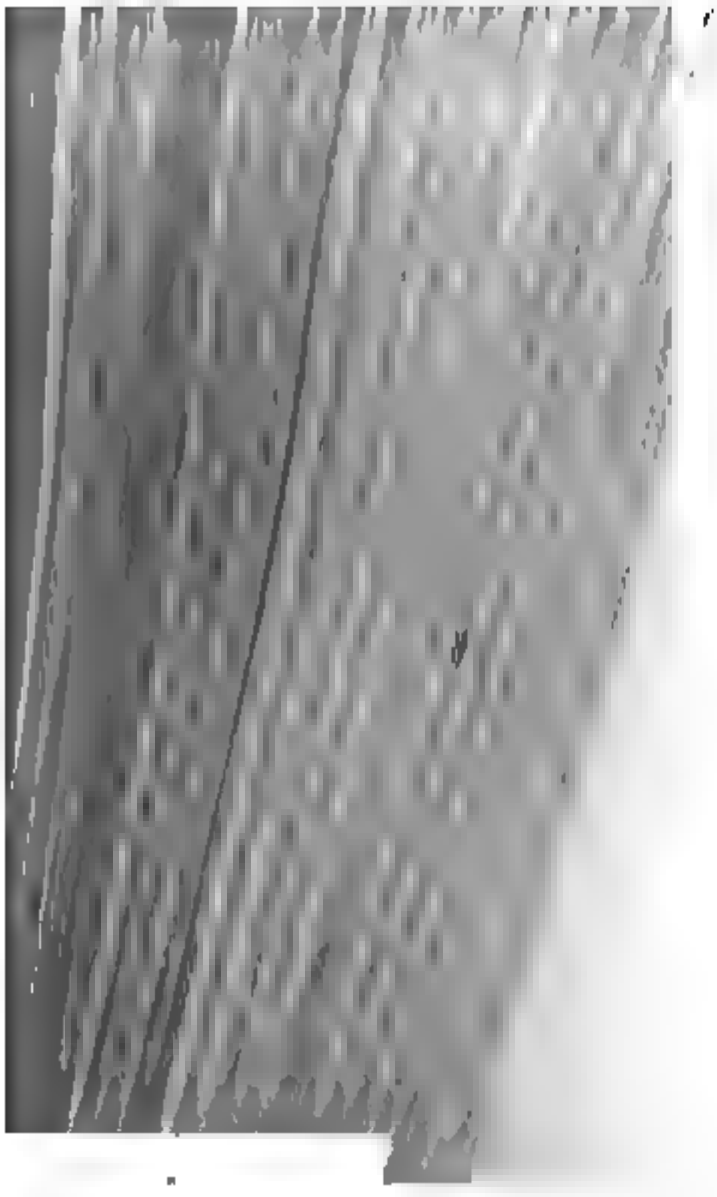
Many are the pious and refle
mourned over this state of thin
who could suggest a remedy.
bring the population together, v
the most liberal offer of govern
have often wondered that in the
ment, or the public, have not i
and appointed devoted and fitting
through a defined district, and visit
the scattered dwellers in the bu
and consoling would be often th
minister of Christ; not a formalist
kind and cordial man of intelligenc
How welcome to the bedside of th
how delightful to those who have
past or their future; how opport
the rites of baptism or marriag
minister resides within scope of l

made voluntary expeditions, and there has been one man who has dedicated himself wholly to this service, and with signal success. The Rev. Anthony Pennieket had from early youth been accustomed to learn the languages of pagan and savage, and had lived a long time in India, seeking to Christianise the natives in many a populous village from Malabar to the Himalayas. His heart and soul were in the work, and years of no ordinary happiness had there passed over his head. His wife was a faithful and tender help-meet in his labours, sharing all his zeal, and glorying in all his triumphs. They had a family of several interesting children, all of whom, however, they saw swept away within a week by a contagious disease; and the finishing blow was given to the happiness of the noble missionary by the death of his wife, who, within the space of three hours, he saw well and buried, the victim of cholera.

Anthony Pennieket, though prostrated for a time, rose again, and pursued his labours. His religion was a living reality, and now he had felt its need and its power. All that he most loved were now in eternity, and he felt that he had nothing to do or desire, but to walk thitherward, and collect as many human sufferers on the way as he could. He braced up his loins for the task, and went on. He was a

the bush from station to station, finding everywhere a home and a cordial welcome. Even while he was quite unknown, he made an immediate impression, which opened the hearts of all classes towards him. There was nothing intrusive, assuming, or dictatorial about him. He explained who and what he was, and pressed on no one his advice or his instructions further than they found ready acceptance. He considered himself as sent to no particular church, but to the church of Christ. He regarded less the few differing points of opinion in those with whom he conversed than the many agreeing ones. True to his own faith, he asked others not to desert theirs, but to follow it faithfully. His dark hair was now grizzled by time and trial; but there was a kindly cheerfulness in his manner which set all temperaments at ease, and touched the nerve of kindness in all bosoms. As he sat by the broad, open fire-place of the station or the hut, you would not have said that "he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He was chatty, affable, full of anecdote, and often merry.

Here, indeed, he felt the consolation of society, and of pleasant intercourse in those hours during which, in India, the ponderous weight of solitude had fallen on him. No solitude visited him as he rode along the bush. There he found with the poet



o
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horse
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station.
as he foll
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is Anthony
there was a
we could but

what a precious life is that of this simple-minded apostle of the wilderness in the sight of God. In his belief the mercies of Christ are as boundless as the universe to the really penitent soul, and the arms of the Saviour stretched on the cross are typical of their eternal extension to every contrite creature of the remotest region and the farthest age.

In this country, to which condemned murderers, midnight burglars, and those stained with every crime, have fled by thousands, many a time has he been fetched in all haste to witness the last terrors of men who through their lives had seemed rugged and insensible as the rocks themselves. Especially in the diggings is he frequently called to see wonderful and fearful scenes of this kind. And now he has grown into a great name. Wherever he comes his presence is hailed as a jubilee. Children run and hang on his skirts, and cries of pleasure and faces radiant with joyous welcome meet him everywhere. Everywhere he is regarded as a father and an especial friend. There is a profound respect shown to his simplicity, for he is a wise and mighty counsellor in the hour of need. As you go through some populous digging where no settled clergyman yet lives, you may see some dense crowd collected in the open air around a preacher, and the passing digger, in answer

to your inquiry, says, "Not Parson Tucker, you ma
be sure!" Here an irresistible smile spread throug
the barrack-room, "That is a regular brick, that i
the good Parson Pennieket, God bless him!"

This good Parson Pennieket had just arrived at
station on the banks of the river Ovens, near th
confluence of the Buckland. It was Christmas Ev
of the year 1853, and the family there was rejoicin
in his presence. They had invited some of thei
nearest neighbours, within a circle of twenty mile
and Mr. Pennieket was to perform service on Christ
mas Day. But while it was yet early in the mornin
a digger rode up at full speed, entreating him to g
instantly to a dying woman on the Buckland diggings
To such a call there was but one answer with An
thony Pennieket; he mounted and rode off, pro
mising, if possible, to return the next morning an
perform divine service at the station.

As the digger rode along with him, he told hi
that he was wanted by a number of other people, b
some to christen their children, and by one family t
celebrate a marriage. They had ten miles to ride
and there was bare time to reach the place so as t
see the sick woman and perform the marriage servic
before twelve o'clock. They sped away through th
bush along the banks of the river, and while the

are on the way we may take a glance at one group at least of the people who are expecting him.

On a woodland promontory, formed by a bend in the river Buckland, a stream issuing from the Snowy Mountains, and here rushing along over its bed of grey clay-slate, between the feet of lofty forest hills, stood a number of white tents. The gold of that district is found only in the bed of the stream, and these were the tents of the few diggers who had appropriated that portion of the river. The whole scene was highly picturesque. The trees amongst which the tents were pitched were iron-bark and stringy-bark gum-trees, whose shagged stems and sturdy looking boughs resembled at a distance English oaks. The river ran between deep, steep banks, over which stooped many of these forest trees full of character. Amid tall mountains thickly clad with woods to the summit, and in the bend of the river, was seen a wild chaos of great grey stones, thrown by places into heaps, and in others built up into rude walls, while the rushing waters turned a number of loudly screaming wheels and pumps, by which the miners cleared portions of the river bottom, and secured its gold.

There were three large tents near each other, belonging to the different branches of a family, who

sons, and a daughter. They
rather rude-looking set of peo
ate and drank with equal vig
sons were generally clad in shir
with the gravel in which they
coming to this spot, and wore a
which gave them a somewhat gri
they were working actively in t
the mother and daughter were
boiling and baking at a great fir
they sate down to breakfast, dinn
fusion of good things, which,
articles of life there, must con
venue, and which excited the w
witnessed it. The bottle and t
the evening, and the family of
felt to be making and spending

Amongst those who looked on
the occupants of a small tent

river, which was rather deep, but was believed to be very rich, but it was clear that they had not sufficient strength to work it. The father was an old man, with the air of a military man, and the sons were youths full of activity, but of not sufficiently robust build and size to conquer of themselves that powerful flood. Various diggers had offered in succession to join them, but the old man declined the proposal; and, indeed, the family seemed to keep themselves very much apart from those around them. They had come there with a cart drawn by a good horse, containing their tent and tools; and both father and sons had worked early and late to construct the necessary large water-wheel, which, fixed in the stream, was to keep in motion their belt-pump. They had now been a month on the ground; they had completed the machinery, and had been endeavouring to fix it in the stream, and to construct a dam, by means of which to drain one half of their river section; but hitherto they had failed. The stream was too powerful for them; and ever when on the verge of success, it broke down their dam, deluged their works, and thus threw them into despair. The Fulldishes shook their heads when they saw this catastrophe several times repeated, and said, "These men will never do it." They themselves had drawn

from their claim pound after pound of gold
father and sons had secured only some few o
It was evident that they were very poor, and
were set down for a proud and stuck-up set of fe
The old man, however, was regarded as the d
and unreasonable one, who refused assistance
they saw that when help was offered them, th
looked anxiously at him with melancholy looks,
seemed to implore him to accept the proffered a

The old man was, in fact, a military man. C
Blantyre had starved through the long peace
half-pay of his commission; for the greater part
time, that of a lieutenant. His wife had long
dead, and with his two sons he had spent many
on the Continent. He had there, in Franc
Germany, given them the very best educatio
was in his power. He had placed them as
boarders at good schools, first in Bonn, afterwa
Guisnes near Calais; and as they thus spent
evenings, and nights, and half-holidays at hou
had daily their society, and made himself their
panion. The captain was well known at both
places by being daily seen walking about wi
two handsome lads. With them he made
excursions up the Rhine, and in the woods
Guisnes. During their school hours, he visit

news-room and read the papers, or cultivated a little garden, which he made a *sine qua non* wherever he was. Besides his boys, the worthy captain sought little society, an Englishman or two whom he met at the news-room being the exception, and that only there or on the public promenade.

But as time went on, and his boys grew up, Captain Blantyre had returned to England, to endeavour to get his sons into some office or profession. His endeavours had all been in vain. Interest he had little, and money he might be said to have none. His had been the usual fate, of seeing numbers of mere boys, but aristocratic boys, put over his head; and instead of promotion, he had fresh debts gradually growing upon him. These he had met in part by mortgaging a very small patrimony; but still they grew as the little property diminished. His sons were two excellent youths, and they set about and procured for themselves, after much vain application and many rebuffs, small clerkships in merchants' offices. They had full and practical knowledge of French and German, which ought to have insured them handsome salaries, but the wary employers used profitably, and pretended not much to value, these advantages.

All these circumstances working together, operated with melancholy effect on the captain. He grew

fretful and morose. During
sons were employed in the ci
wretched fortunes and long n
embittered against fortune an
preyed with augmenting wei
the visits of duns drove him
the young men returned home
have enjoyed a cheerful heartl
and the old man sunk into hir
was a woful life, and in the
ness came the news of the go
man had a spark of enthusi
served a short time at the Ca
his blood warmed at the idea
new country, and a last ch
proposal was caught at with
men; their little property w
necessary outfit; and freed f
last fragment of their worldly
the father and sons set out for

At this moment they had
the gold-fields. They had v
the old man, accustomed t
astonished all that saw him by
in that warm climate; and as
active, enterprising, and indef

of the desired gold. They might have been seen, equipped in ordinary digger costume, toiling in their hole under a sun at 120°, or hurrying away to some new discovery, laden with tools, provisions, and bedding, like camels. The old man, who, spite of his exacerbated temper, was attached to them in the extreme, often watched them on such occasions with tears in his eyes, and muttered to himself, "Shameful! shameful! that the world has no better fortune for such merit."

The elder of these two noble youths, Leonard, was now about two-and-twenty, and Mark, the younger, about twenty. Leonard was of rather a slight build, but muscular, active, and full of spirit. His features were fine, rather delicately cut, and aristocratic. He was the general caterer and manager, mounting the horse ever and anon, and away to the stores in the diggings, where he procured all their necessaries; and Mark, a fine lad, of a somewhat stronger make, and rounder turn of feature, looked after the horse in the bush, and officiated as chief cook and baker, assisted by Leonard as need required; the old captain, when not himself as fully employed as the lads, as he called them, keeping the tent in order, and preparing breakfast or dinner. Thus they had lived on for twelve months, but with little success in

They had now, there was nc
claim in possession, but they v
handed for it, and Leonard and
father to let them employ a co
wanted, for a few days, to buil
There were plenty of strong fe
pound a day each. But the old
more and more irritable as thei
straiter, asked sharply where th
from. "Sell the horse," said
horse!" exclaimed the father, '
here, if we find no gold. Sel
How then are we ever to get a
place?"

"But," replied Leonard, "th
believe that there is plenty of
Every one says there must be
Fulldishes getting hundredwe
a few yards of us. They have

our gold," said the captain, "but they 'll not get it; I'll take care of that."

"But, dear father," said Leonard, "we shall never get it without help." "No, of course," said the old man, angrily; "of course not, we never do get it. It is not our luck, it never was, and I expect it never will be. Anybody can get it but us; any fool, any rogue, any good-for-nothing scamp, they can get it. Fellows without an idea, without a care what they do; who only spend it in drunkenness when they have got it. These are the fellows who have the luck, the devil take them!"

The two youths sate confounded, and greatly hurt. There was a long silence, when the captain in a sharp, scolding voice broke out: "And what is the use, I should like to know, of our sitting here? That won't fish the gold up out of the stream if it be there. If we are to have it we must get it, as other people do."

"If we really only knew how," said Leonard, "but we have tried everything: we have not the necessary strength, and to battle with the river as we are is only a waste of time." Leonard was evidently suffering the greatest distress of mind, but uncomplainingly.

and fell into a savage silence.
pause: "But my strength is goi
is good; thank God for that;"
silent and wrathful.

Tears started into the eyes of b
They rose, and quietly went ou
we did but know really what to d
other, "but this is dreadful; th
This state of our father's mind i
shall we do?" said Leonard.
double-barrelled gun; I have so
and I would sell my revolver, b
protection, and it would not now f
for the necessary help." The tw
men walked dejectedly away into

This had now been the state
time. Poverty hung on them w
They had nothing left in their li
was absolutely necessary for th

effect of their situation on their father. His temper was rising, and his health was evidently failing under it. Of late, with all his desire to keep up, he could not work many hours together, and he could not sleep at nights. No doubt his misfortunes then came with all the gloomy power of darkness and silence over him. They often perceived that he arose, and throwing his cloak over him, would ramble out into the open air for hours together. This could not last, it made them miserable beyond words; and their sorrow was the greater, because they could not bend his will by any means to reason. His pride would not let him sell his horse; his extreme anxiety to secure the whole of the present gold to themselves would not permit him to share it with more robust men.

It was now Christmas Eve; the weather was intensely hot, the midsummer of Australia. The heat appeared completely to prostrate the poor, dejected, spirit-worn old man; he lay feverish and feeble on his bed. The sons were greatly alarmed, and after consultation, Leonard rode off to the stores, which were about two miles down the valley. He thought that his father needed something strengthening, and he resolved to spend the last shilling that he had to purchase some little luxury. Money indeed he had none; but he had a beautiful pipe and a

Russian leather tobacco cas
had often admired, and for
ten shillings. In his Lon
was naturally fond of every
in dress and gentlemanly in
both on his wardrobe, smal
elegance of his apparatus for
luxury. Here, indeed, unde
and privations, his pipe ha
source, and he had many a s
and smoked, and thought, ti
that was his salvation. Soo
resolution, he had risen up
threadbare path.

He now resolved to sell th
and take the price out in s
When he entered the store,
people there, and amongst t
Fulldishes, procuring the
which was to witness at on
wedding in their family. Le
supplied himself, and stood
style in which he made his pu
done, the storekeeper scribbl
a piece of paper, and threw i
stood thus: —

		£	s.	d.
1 doz. of Champagne,	@ 20/ per bottle	12	0	0
6 bottles of Port Wine,	@ 15/ „ .	4	10	0
6 ditto of Brandy,	@ 20/ „ .	6	0	0
1 doz. of Ale,	@ 6/ „ .	3	12	0
6 Quartern Loaves,	@ 5/ . .	1	10	0
12 lbs. of Lump Sugar	@ 1/4 . .	0	16	0
12 lbs. Raw ditto,	@ 1/ . .	0	12	0
4 lbs. Fresh Butter,	@ 5/ . .	1	0	0
Currants, Raisins, Lemon-peel, &c.	.	0	10	0
1 Early Melon		0	18	0
1 doz. Apples,	@ 1/ each .	0	12	0
2 lbs. Early Grapes,	@ 5/ . .	0	10	0
6 lbs. Potatoes,	@ 1/ . .	0	6	0
Onions, 1/6 per lb., Spice, &c.	. .	0	8	4
1 Ham (10 lbs.)	@ 2/6 . .	1	5	0
		£34	12	4

Young Fulldish threw down three ten pound notes and five sovereigns, and saying "Give me some tobacco for the change," put his purchases into his cart and drove away.

There was a time when Leonard, after seeing that, would not have ventured to bring out his own little business, but he had had many a bitter transaction to effect, and was proportionately hardened. His father's illness—for Leonard rightly and sorrowfully included his irritable temper as part of his complaint—steeled him to much, though it could not make him entirely

cease to feel. He, therefore, with a deep si
the store-keeper into the back tent, told hir
father was very ill, and that they had been
lucky lately, and therefore he would let him
pipe and tobacco case, and take the valu
goods. The store-keeper's eyes brightene
sight of the long desired pipe and case, and l
asked Leonard what he would have instead.
forced a melancholy smile, and said that he
purchase in the lordly fashion of young Full
he must have a pint bottle of ale for his
quartern loaf, a pound of potatoes, and a qua
pound of fresh butter; that would leave h
pence, with which he could get a nice beef-s
his father.

The man handed to him the articles, took
and case, smiled again most sunnily, and then
denly, a cloud passing over his face, he sai
hang me if I can do it! Take 'em, mate — ta

"Do n't you want them?" asked Leo
alarm. "I thought you did."

"That 's not it," said the man. "I'm ble
can do it. I know you do n't want to part
It 's only for your ailing father; and thougl
see such things, somehow — no! I won't ha
be hanged if I do!"

Leonard stood aghast. "What shall I do, then, for my poor father?"

"Do!" said the man, "why, what should you do? Take the things home as fast as you can, and cook them. I'll trust you, mate;—I'll trust you that, and more." He was hurrying away to his customers.

"But," said Leonard, seizing his sleeve, "if I am never able to pay?"

"Then I'll forgive you, mate—I'll forgive you. That matter will break no squares between us." He was gone.

Leonard hastened homeward, his heart considerably lightened. He had saved his favourite pipe and case, and he resolved, come what would, to pay the good-hearted store-keeper. As soon as he got back, Mark and he began cooking the potatoes and the steak, and boiling the kettle for tea,—the constant accompaniment of every meal. While they were busy over their fire, much busier were the Fulldishes just by. There was a wonderful running and bustling to and fro. The men were all in their best, and the women too, and yet all were busy about the fire boiling and roasting. There was a wonderful array of pots and kettles steaming round the great fire, and women coming out, ever and anon, and lifting up lids with long sticks thrust under the handles, and peep-

child was two months old. Al
diggings there was a stunning nc
and pistols, and of barking do
sound of fiddles, and of people
canvass tent near. There were
and fro in new wide-awakes and
blue and more of scarlet; and t
Eve as noisy, and merry, and n
ever was in Europe.

But alas! poor Captain Blantyr
by all this noise around him to s
irritability. "Fools! madmen!
when people were lying ill? Co
themselves merry without actuall
neighbours with their detestable d
sioner ought to see to it; the po
down; the clergyman ought to wa
did the parson care if he only got

Leonard and Mark endeavour

you were well, you would be the first to enjoy the pleasure of your neighbours."

"If I were well," said the old man; "but then I am not well; and little they care for that. Well, well, a little while, and then it will be no matter."

The poor youths returned to their cooking. They fondly hoped that the sight of the little feast; the savory steak, the potatoes (none of which had entered their tent the last six months), and the panikin of foaming ale, would please him and do him good. They had a square piece of bark of about two feet each way. On this they spread a napkin, and on it arranged the smoking savoury steak, the beautifully boiled and steamed potatoes, the bread and fresh butter, and the ale in its bottle. The old gentleman's bed was on the floor of the tent; and they brought in their simple but inviting tray, and placed it by him. The old man lay with his eyes shut, but far from sleeping, for the heat was most oppressive. The sun for two months had blazed day after day through a cloudless sky, and everything was scorched into dryness; the air was motionless; the flies, as if excited to fury by the heat, were fierce and incessant in their attacks on the suffering old man, thereby immensely aggravating his irritability. Mark took up a green bough, and began beating them away, while Leonard, in

anxious expectation of the
would not take his dinner.

The captain opened his e
on the little banquet, and
meaning of this?"

"It means, dear father,"
know you greatly need a
hope you will enjoy these
little ale for you."

"Ale! potatoes!—and
Where did they come from

"From the store, of cour

"Had you money to pay
father.

Leonard paused a momen
dear father, what need?—
I have always paid him, an

"O Lord! O Lord! mor
claimed the old man, throw
on his back, and again cl
stooped over him, entreatin
waved his branch more agit

"Dearest father," said L
tasting the dinner. Don't t
cost; it really cost very l
pleasure you will give us."

The old man seemed somewhat softened by the distress of his children. He rose up again. "Well, well," said he, "but before I can eat, let me taste your beer."

Leonard, delighted, poured out a panikin, and handed it to his father. The old man took it, tasted it, and setting down the panikin, with a face of intense disgust, said, "Beer!—do you call that beer? It is poison. What might you give for that?"

"Only three shillings," said Leonard; "is it not good."

"Three shillings! three shillings for that stale rubbish; why it is the dregs of the cask! O Lord! O Lord! when you buy any more beer, just drink it yourselves." The old man flung himself down again, and spite of all the entreaties of his sons, refused to touch or taste anything. Leonard took up the panikin, and tasted the ale. His ill luck had attended its purchase, it was unquestionably vile stuff. He silently stole out of the tent, and going hastily into the wood, he there walked on for some time perfectly beside himself. His last fond endeavour to please and benefit his father thus to fail! What he had meant so well, so ill received! His heart seemed ready to break, and he saw nothing before them but, on the very verge of success, for his father to die in

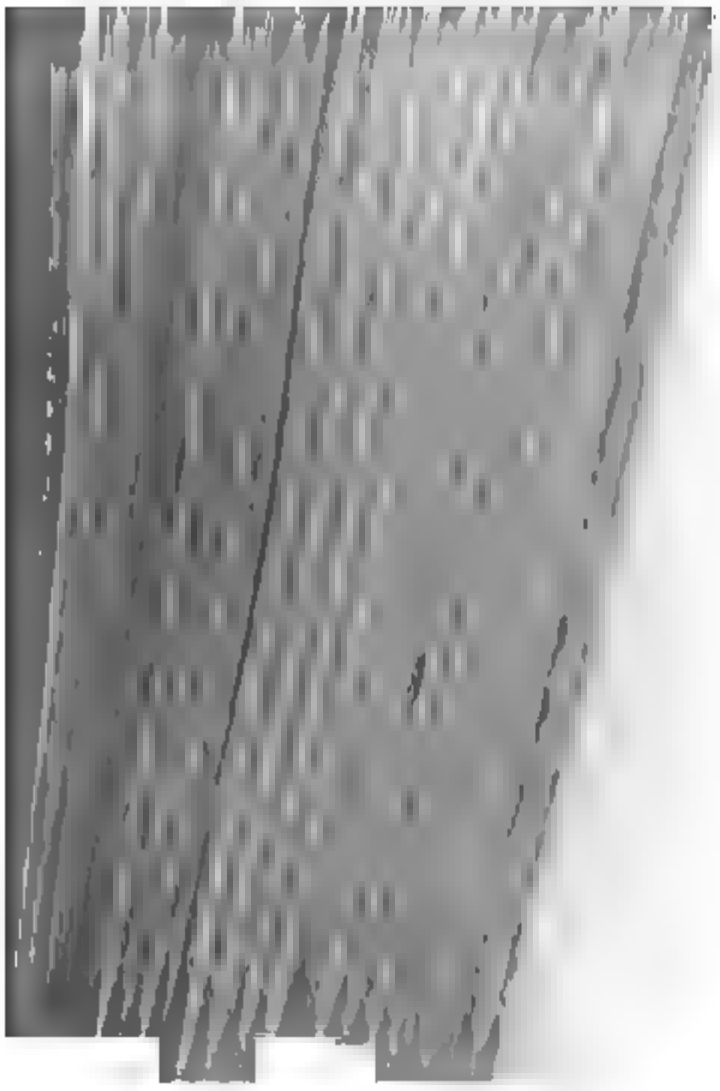
that they were all dead and bu
the rapid tramp of a horse, an
stopped and gazed at Leonard.

Leonard was too much abso
notice for some time the horsem
voice, saying, "My dear you
trouble oppresses you?" sudden
tion, and looking up he saw the
the venerable Anthony Penniek
had instantly been struck by t
the youth's whole form and
accustomed to read the faces of
pen of many passions and feelin
here was no ordinary woe.

Leonard knew well the divi
man. It flashed through his h
to be their saving angel, and sp
the good man's hand in both hi
out to him all his troubles, and t
the moment. Anthony Penniek

the dusty earth. But as he wept he felt his heart relieved, and hope and peace, and a sublime confidence in God and in his devoted servant thus sent to him as it were from heaven, glow in his bosom.

He walked on by the side of Mr. Pennieket's horse towards their tent, answering as they went all that he asked him of their circumstances and his father's illness, and on coming near the place, the good man nodded kindly, smiled, and said he would call on his father directly, and then rode on to the Fulldishes' tent, where it was clear he was expected to dinner. With the tact for which he was as famous as for his piety,—a tact which sprung from the instinct of benevolence,—he at once hushed the noisy merriment there, and before he would sit down to dinner, he hastened into Captain Blantyre's tent, and telling him that he had heard of his indisposition, sat down, and entered into a kind and sympathising conversation with him. If there was a man on earth whom Captain Blantyre profoundly venerated, spite of his angry speech about the clergyman caring for nothing but a good dinner, it was Anthony Pennieket. His unexpected entrance into the tent, produced an effect almost miraculous. The captain was at first struck dumb; then recovering himself as he listened to the



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and insist on
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new-married couple, and the new-christened baby, and the baby's mother.

In the afternoon, came the noble Apostle of the Wilderness himself. He sat down and conversed in such a pleasant, unostentatious, and yet impressive manner, that both the captain and his sons were charmed beyond measure. While Leonard and Mark took a walk into the wood to look at their horse, which fed in a little valley there, the old captain opened all his heart to the soothing, melting touches of the good clergyman's skilful and benign conversation; and Anthony Pennieket, on his part, praised the appearance and the evident goodness of the young men. To all this, and to their cleverness, and unwearied diligence, and affection for him, the captain zealously responded. On their return, the good man entered with a most benevolent spirit into their situation and their plans, and at his suggestion, every difficulty vanished as by magic. He proposed that two of the young Fulldishes, who were plain, uneducated young men, but of really warm hearts and clever heads, should join the two young Blantyre's at the river claim, and the captain consented to it at once.

The young men were struck with amazement; but such is the power of a great, good man. Before the

tract itself into half its usual co
wheel screaming and revolving
working the Californian belt-pu
and laying dry the bottom of th
river. Enough! after three mo
claim, Leonard and Mark found
of one thousand pounds. They b
rough but kind-hearted Fulldis
down to a populous new diggin
young men have set up as auctio
the auctioneer, Mark officiates as
their talents have drawn them an
Tools, old and new, horses, d
ble kinds of goods, for the su
and individuals, come under t
they see themselves in the certa
fortune.

Captain Blantyre has become w

extraordinary pride. He sees them now, as he has all his life longed to see them; wealthy, flourishing, and beloved. He has fallen in with a tall, elderly gentleman, who, like himself, has little to do. While his sons are engaged with business, these two old veterans read the newspaper together, and take together their daily walk. On one point they never can agree. The captain is a profound admirer of Wellington; his new friend is as ardent a worshipper of Buonaparte. On this point, they daily dispute, grow very warm, do n't know whether they shall not hate one another, and are on the point, every day about four o'clock, of leaving each other in a rage, and never speaking again. But Major Tobin, the tall old gentleman, will suddenly smile, put out his hand, saying, "Well, captain, I see we shall never agree on this point;" and so they shake hands heartily, and go home to dinner. And many a pleasant dinner, I may add, have the captain and his old new friend, and his two sons, had together, especially when the noble Apostle of the Wilderness drops in, as he always does on his journeys that way, taking up his lodging there for the time; leaving behind him when he departs a feeling as if the gates of heaven stood nearer to them, and as if soft airs and odours of blessedness were breathed forth from them all around.

[illegible]
[illegible] I point the way even. I [illegible]
I'll tell you what it is, [illegible]
man when I see him, as w[illegible]
wether or well-bred horse.
Parson Docker is a judge yet [illegible]
there a better, doctor? wher[illegible]
With this, the old squatter-par[illegible]
him, laid a pair of somebody's [illegible]
for a pillow, and was asleep [illegible]
bitable signs. The next m[illegible]
dispersed, and Tallangetta s[illegible]
guests. It was become a sor[illegible]
agreeable description,—for afte[illegible]
no reckoning.

CHAP. XX.

THE GRAND DENOUEMENT.

THINGS were in this position when, one day, a considerable party were seated at dinner at Tallangetta, including Dr. Woolstan and the almost every-day guest, Dr. Spenser Grayson, assembled to meet Mr. Flavel, who, returned from his long tour, had just arrived at Charles's renewed invitation. Charles pleased himself with the idea that not only would the whole of his family be delighted with the aristocratic elegance and intellectual accomplishment of Flavel, but that he and Grayson would be mutually charmed to make each other's acquaintance. He had felt proud in the anticipation of seeing two such men at once under their roof. But, as is the case with many mortal hopes, in this Charles was grievously disappointed. Flavel had arrived, and was at once a favourite with the whole family. Mr. Fitzpatrick knew his father, and was well acquainted with his family history and standing. They conversed with

much mutual interest on many Engli topics. But the moment that Flavel w to Grayson, he made a most cold and and did not even extend his hand to me extended hand of Grayson; but with down, cold and cloudy, at a distance. was most painful to all present. Dr. G of all, seemed to feel it. He appeared ease, talked, gossiped with the ladies number of anecdotes with great vivacity Opposite to him, at table, sat Flavel, ha grave, and silent. Charles tried to bre chilling to all around him, except to the and loquacious Grayson, by referring to Bullarook, to Crouchy, and to the Randall at the trial, which they had an opportunity of discussing. Nothing Flavel remained immoveably taciturn, monosyllabic.

The conversation turned on an extraor wayman, who was astonishing the wl This man had robbed a great number o without the slightest trace of him beir In his audacity of success, he had written master-general, saying, that he would rot in the colony, and defying him to prevent

turned out, by comparing this letter with MSS. in the hands of the editors of the *Argus* newspaper, that all this time, this highwayman had been sending to that paper the most beautiful and original poems they had ever received.

"A most curious and amusing anecdote," said Spenser Grayson, "has come to my knowledge, regarding this man. On one occasion lately, he and his gang, for it appears he has a number of confederates, were seated round their fire in a wood. They were very merry, having been very lucky in waylaying a large quantity of gold, and this man suddenly exclaimed: 'A capital lark! The Wangaratta mail is just now about coming up. It carries no money of any value, but it will be good fun to take and read the letters; it will help to pass off jocundly the evening.' No sooner said than done, and thus, not for plunder, but for the joke of reading people's letters, did these fellows rob the mail."

"How in the world did you come to know that?" exclaimed Dr. Woolstan.

"Nothing easier," said Flavel, laconically, now volunteering a remark.

"How! What!" said Grayson; "how so easy, Mr. Flavel?"

yet reddening at the same ti
man is this Mr. Flavel!'
"What can we do with such

"Yes, I recollect, thought I
self; "there is something in
sight,—or, is it something mor

While the company was in t
and awkward state, suddenly
were heard entering the court
sudden halt, and the next mom
and in walked Mr. Peter Mart
in the sun, and with his riding
a spirit or a demon had mad
could not have produced a mo
rose from the table hastily,
The ladies, terrified, were al
Fitzpatrick stood pale, his lip
and amazement, yet violently
himself collected before his g
everyone was beyond expressio

sergeant of police, preceding at least a dozen of his men.

Mr. Peter Martin, calm, self-possessed, and confident, advanced into the centre of the room, and turning opposite to Dr. Spenser Grayson, said to the police, "That is your man, make sure of him." When all eyes were turned upon Grayson, that gentleman was seen standing with a pale but determined face, and a revolver already in his hand.

"Whoever attempts to touch me is a dead man," he said, defiantly. The next moment, the head of the police ordered his men to advance and take him. As they made the first move of their feet, the revolver was discharged, but Dr. Woolstan, who stood at Grayson's right hand, struck up his arm, and the bullet passed through the upper part of an opposite window, cutting its way so clean that it made not the slightest fracture, but only left a circular hole, perfect as a wadding punch cuts its round in a sheet of cardboard. The next instant Dr. Woolstan, with a powerful grasp, had pinioned the desperado's arms, and the police flung themselves upon him. After a desperate struggle he was secured and bound.

"And now sir," said Mr. Martin, turning to Mr. Fitzpatrick, "let me apologise for this disagreeable intrusion."

"That is only too true," replie
but with feeling. "That is my
fortune; but let me explain this
will admit that it is, at least, ne

Mr. Fitzpatrick nodded to him
who had nearly reached the doo
intently.

"The other day a party of
the Wangaratta mail." All r
startled attention. "They re
enough, not for necessity, nor
what they called a lark. They
letters for their evening's amuse
Why, thought every one, "th
that Grayson has just been tellir

"Well sir, they read the
merriment was produced by t
private affairs and sentiments
the attention of one man was ar
of a letter which fell into his h

He was the paid spy on this family, and the address of this letter was in the hand of his own patron and employer."

"On this family!" said Mr. Fitzpatrick, in astonishment. There was an exclamation of wonder and alarm amongst the ladies. Mr. Martin went on. "A paid spy on this family; he opened the letter and found that there was a second paid spy, on himself, and on this family likewise." Here the sensation was extreme. "That second spy is Dr. Spenser Grayson, better known as the celebrated forger, George Hersant." At this declaration there was a perfect shriek of terror amongst the ladies. Dr. Grayson, the pleasant, the favourite guest, a paid spy upon them; the convict forger Hersant, the robber of mails, the associate of highwaymen!

"Sir," said Mr. Fitzpatrick, "you are of course, prepared to prove all this."

"Oh, most amply prepared. Listen, Sir Thomas."

"I beg, Mr. Martin, you will forego that title; I do not yet know that it is mine; I do not use it, and I count it in those who do simply a mockery."

"Sir Thomas," continued Mr. Martin, "I know you by no other title; I have never acknowledged it in any other man, and I never will. Listen; in a few words I will tell you what concerns you on this

point. From the hour you set foot on
your steps have been dogged, and you
your native land withstood, if necessar
death and the death of your son. Need
what object, or by whom instigated?"

An expression of horror went through
company. When Mr. Fitzpatrick had
covered his self-possession, and recalled
warning of Dr. Woolstan, he said, "O
true?"

"Oh, too true!" continued Mr. Marti
words, the case is this: Mr. Patrick Fitzp
successor of your title and estate, hired a
Morillier, a Swiss, whom you once ex
punished for fraud on the course" (Sir
expression showed that he fully recolle
"to follow you here. He was commissioned
no violence, except in case you or your so
plated a return to England. That was
vented at any cost. The man was well pa
into bad company and habits — as was his
and under the suspicions of his paymast
was selected and sent out that serpent who
his way into your very family; and, und
of a naturalist, into that of many others.

accident has brought to light and to an end this villany."

"But," said Sir Thomas, "may I ask how you came to be aware of all this?"

"I have been aware of it from the first. I was at once informed of it by Mr. Banks, your late steward, and now the steward of Patrick Fitzpatrick."

"An arrant traitor," said Sir Thomas; "I would not believe a word of his."

"A most singularly, incorruptibly honest and honourable man," persisted Mr. Martin, "and one of the truest, best friends you have, Sir Thomas."

"What! the man that continued with the knave who robbed his master!"

"Who continued there to serve that master!" said Mr. Martin, emphatically. "It was to serve you, Sir Thomas, that he remained in the service of the usurper. How could he serve you so much? — and how entirely he has served you! At once he informed me of this plot; and that moment I set out to defeat it."

"You! you! — is that possible!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. The ladies clasped their hands in amazement, and drew eagerly near.

"It is for that alone that I came here; for that alone that I am here. What other inducement could

I have? At home have I not fortune, frien
congenial duties and pursuits? But now
done what was necessary. Morillier, like
others, thought I was your enemy, because
aloof, and he unbosomed himself to me. He
my advice, submitted to government, on co
that he shall turn queen's evidence against this
and the gang, and shall be allowed to retire
Zealand.

"Can it be possible then that you have
acting as my friend?" said Sir Thomas. "Y
wilder me. Why then did you not sooner info
of this?"

"The time was not come," continued Mr. M
"the affair was not ripe; you would not ha
lieved me; besides, I had other work to do."

"What other work?" demanded Sir Thoma

"Dismiss the police with their prisoner;
then explain myself. Mr. Waller," he added,
ing to the serjeant of police, "you can take
prisoner."

The police withdrew with the quondam Dr. S
Grayson in their midst. What a dream it ap
to all who knew him; how curious the inst
knowledge of his character and even of his de
Mr. Flavel.

When they had withdrawn, Mr. Martin said, "Sir Thomas, it has long been my misfortune to stand in a hostile position to you. I will go no farther than is necessary into this unhappy history, because it can do no good; and happily I hold the key to the whole, and, as I believe, the key to perfect concord, and to your full restoration to fortune and title, in my hand." The astonishment of the whole company was unbounded. He continued: "Your mother and my mother were sisters—dear sisters. When my mother died early, your mother behaved to me as to a son. I loved her as my mother; I have loved her memory; and have lived to fulfil her dearest wishes. She always feared what has come to pass — the waste of your fortune — the loss of your title and estate. For some time before she died she had information, the ambassador being dead and his chaplain not findable, that Patrick Fitzpatrick treated her marriage as apocryphal, and would some day attempt to secure the estate. She bound me by an oath to take no part, should such circumstances arise, till you were thoroughly cured by the loss of everything of your ruinous passion for the turf. There you have the secret of my standing aloof, and of never assisting you during your trials by any offer of my ample means. Well, here you are; your fortune,

fore now put into your hand t
your mother, and I shall be grea
deceived if it do not contain the
certificate of your parents' marria
the packet, which Sir Thomas toc
still held as if he were in a dream.
recital which he had heard had in
founded and paralysed his faculti

At once Aunt Judith exclaime
it is our dear mother's letter, let
was proceeding to take it from
action seemed to rouse him; he l
"Nay, Judy, nay; it is for me."
gazed a moment on a paper whicl
let the whole fall to the groun
time he sate down in his chair, lai
table, and burst into a passion
Judith again rushed forward, snat
and running her eyes rapidly throug
"It is so, it is so! it is my mother'

which I shall rejoice in heaven. A day of triumph over yourself and your dark fortunes. May God for ever bless you and yours.

"'MARY MORTON FITZPATRICK.'"

It would be useless to attempt to describe the scene which took place. The tears, the embracings, the congratulations in which Mr. Martin became a principal figure. All at once comprehended the greatness and nobility of his character, which had made him willing for years to endure the ill-will and misconceptions of his nearest relatives for a sacred duty and the accomplishment of a grand object. Sir Thomas Fitzpatrick was amongst the first to make this acknowledgement. He stepped forward, embraced Mr. Martin with the affection of their early years, and told him he should never live long enough to do full justice to the nobility of his friendship and the beautiful steadfastness of his character. Mr. Martin shook him by the hand, and held it and shook it still, while tears rolled down his cheeks, but he could not utter a word. Where now was that iron stoicism of his nature, that unbendable fortitude? all gone, all melted away in the tenderness and the depth of feelings which always underlie such strength.

What more need we say? Much followed, but

of that we propose to say but
rushing frantically on Mr. Mar
in a vehement embrace, as st
half blinded by his tears, ar
whither? He was galloping ev
the station of Bongubine, wher
house, caught first Sara Martin,
in an embrace as startling as
Mr. Martin himself, and then
out! it is all right! We have
father is restored to his own, or
all, it is through cousin Ma
friends!"

The ladies smiled, for they
some such news, and Sara Ma
and never looked so beautiful a
"And now you are mine, and
not even yourself, you stubborn

Charles could not rest till th
out, and went off with him to
grand jubilee.

At Tallangetta, a curious s
had taken place. After the ex
subsided, and Sir Thomas, loo
certificate, said, "We shall h
little document presented in

Patrick Fitzpatricks to flight like a morning mist before the sun. But still it would have been as well if we had had the living evidence of the chaplain who signed it, this Thomas Tucker."

"I have him too," said Mr. Martin. "He is at this very moment in your kitchen, regaling himself on beef and brandy, and killing your servants with laughter at his sallies."

"Indeed!" exclaimed all. "How extraordinary!"

"It was very remarkable," continued Mr. Martin, "but one of the very first names which caught my ear in this colony was that of Tucker — Parson Tucker, as he is universally called, for he is one of the most public men in it. He, long ago, had his gown stripped off because of his habits of carousing. He shook the dust off his feet against the pulpit, and is now a squatter, with his one hundred thousand pounds, and famed for his wit, his sarcasm, his love of low company, and his bottle. No man makes a bargain like him when he is sober, or drinks like him when it is done. I have his affidavit of his identity, and of the genuineness of this signature, taken by the principal law officer of the colony before the governor himself."

No one could sufficiently admire the discovery of this most important man by Mr. Martin, and the

business-like manner in which he had don
thing.

"But," said Mr. Martin, "here comes t
himself, drunk as a lord." And there app
tall, thin man, with very white hair, and a v
merry face, who came forward, putting out a
shake with every one, and saying, "Ha! h
hearties! I am the man. I am Parson Tuck
married you. Ah! there you are, pretty n
Bless me!" seizing the hand of Georgina, and
her directly before him. "Bless me! why, j
same; grown no older! Well, that is wo
But, by wattles and gum-tree! that 's not fai
I 'm grown old, white-headed, have a dozen s
daughters as big as you. Old Parson Tucke
call me; and you, why, you 're just the same
girl. And Sir Thomas! Aha! well, you
little older, but not half so old as me yet. Ble
it must be this climate, and brandy—some say
makes one old. But I do n't know; everybod
get old, only this wonderful young missis here

"It was my grandmother that you knew
cried Georgina, laughing merrily.

"Grandmother! nonsense; I know you. Al
were always a merry one. Aha! Martin, my
come, you do n't ask me to drink. What ha

got there? We must have a nobbler together after all this."

"There is wine;" said Mr. Martin. "I have no doubt Sir Thomas will make you welcome."

"Pshaw! wine! trash, trash; give me some good brandy."

"Well, to-morrow;" said Mr. Martin. "But now, it is time to retire."

"Retire! what! go to bed? Nonsense! it is not time; it is daylight:" looking about on the table, and nearly oversetting different decanters. "Fah! I shall go back into the kitchen; there are jolly fellows there, and capital brandy. Good-bye! good-bye!" and feeling his way along the wall for support, he made his way out.

"And that," said Sir Thomas, "is the man that I have heard my father and mother describe as one of the most gentlemenly, modest, agreeable young men they ever met with. What cannot men make of themselves for good or for evil!" In the morning, amongst the guests at breakfast, this same Mr. Tucker appeared, sober, acute, well-behaved, and full of the soundest information about the colony, and curious reminiscences of his life in India, in the South Seas, in Sydney, and here. He invited them to visit him at his house up the country; which some one, when

he was gone, said was o
colony.

And now, for an adie
the joy of this great turn
Fitzpatricks looked with
Three years had just ro
The spring was here on
more, those magnificent
billows of vegetable go
fragrant. Once more t
home, over that lovely l
the blue summits of th
had found friends, kind,
dear. With some disqu
years of life here now a
nent beauty, newness, ar
and great advantages, ca
land, or they could well
here. It was not possib
selves away without hea

They were even glad
they had disposed of th
necessary documents a
property in England, a
These were sent; but as
said, why dispose of it at

of his. He had made an arrangement with Jonas Popkins as overseer and third shareholder, and was satisfied that the capital invested would pay him tenfold what it would in England. Why not hold estates here as well as in the West Indies?

"A capital idea!" said Sir Thomas, "but where will you find us another Jonas Popkins?"

"Not a Popkins," said Mr. Martin, "but a Randall; a man in a thousand, and who deserves the very best which fortune can bestow on him."

The idea was seized and acted upon. Mr. Randall agreed to quit his desert, leaving Crouchy on it till it could be disposed of. For some months, therefore, the Fitzpatrick family lingered on at Tallangetta, making the best use of their stay by enjoying the society of their friends. They spent days and weeks amongst them, or had them about them at Tallangetta. They made a visit, when at Bongubine, to Lahni mill, and found the Popkinses there enjoying all the quiet happiness of that beautiful scenery. Abijah was as sturdy as old Time himself. A regular sober, rusty, dusty miller, admiring his little active wife, who had now a round rosy face, and a clear blue eye reflecting not merely the colour of the sky, but the joy of the heaven above it. The Fitzpatricks took wonderfully to the old people and the young ones

too. Mrs. Patty was an esp
Thomas and Lady Fitzpatric
her quite as a daughter. A
a flirtation with Jonas. S
laughter at his odd ideas so
expressed.

She went out one day wi
early mushrooms, which he as
of carnations, because they w
of the properties of flesh, an
after flesh. He said that, i
would put a Thames Tunn
to go through in floods. "
Thames Tunnel," said Aun
a Campaspe Tunnel." "N
can't be, because there is no
under the Thames, and t
Tunnel." Out of that Aun
him. But what amused he
told her he meant to marry
And when she asked him wh
said, "Oh! she was in Eng
up as they sat by a well wh
years old." "But," said Aunt
then, she is seventeen now,
love with some one else."

"for I have written and asked her, and she says she has always been true to me, and can very well wait for three more years."

This tickled the fancy of Aunt Judith immensely, that this faithful couple could afford to wait a few years at the great ages of seventeen.

But time has passed on. The Fitzpatricks at length bade a regretful adieu to Tallangetta, and sailed for England. They found their old house and estates all ready for them. Great events have taken place. Charles, with the full approbation of all parties, has married Sara Martin, and prides himself more every day on her beauty and her sense. Georgina is become Lady Dunallen, for Flavel came over with them in time to add comfort to the last days of his father; and it is a curious psychological fact, that since he has become more attached to a wife he has had less intercourse with the spirit of his sister. The growing environments of the visible life here, as it were, draws a veil over the invisible; but never was the young Lord Dunallen more contented with his lot.

Both he and Charles talk of making a visit, one of

these days, to their old haunts and f
antipodes, for they remember their abo
beautiful and novel portion of their ex
retain the fondest affection for the Squa
whether it were in the Desert of Bullaroo
lovely heights of Tallangetta.

One rather singular circumstance took pl
removal of the Fitzpatricks to England; Pegg
would go with them. Abner, on the contrary
not move. He liked the climate, liked th
about him, liked to grow grapes, melons, and p
without hot-houses or walls. More than th
was getting rich. "By all means, let Peggy
said he, "if she likes to accompany my lad
shall contrive to do till she comes back."

"Comes back!" cried Peggy, "do n't thee ex
that, Abner. I know what 's what, and I prefer
fine, fresh, healthy climate of England, my nati
air, to this fly-blown, sweltering country, with t
year turned wrong end-ways."

Peggy went: but arriving in her native air i
February, and having a full dose of the damp and
the east wind for the next five months, she declared
the climate of England had been ruined whilst she
was away, and was done for for ever. Having had

influenza upon influenza, and bronchitis in all its force, as soon as she could regain a little of her strength, she bundled up, and set sail back again.

"What!" said Abner, when he saw her come riding up to the huts in a wool-dray, which had been down to Melbourne, "come back again, Peggy, to this poor, fly-blown country?"

"Yes, come am I," said Peggy, "forced to it, thou may be sure, or I never should. But the climate of England is done for. It is all over with it since we left. Steam and railroads must have done it, for I can think of nothing else, but it 's acchully unbearable. Oh! what have n't I gone through, with colds and coughings, and stuffings and sneezings, and sore throats, and pains in my chest, and pains in my limbs, and shooting pains all over me, and qualms and water-tawms in my stomach, surelye nobody ever seed what a climate it is become. They 've got new diseases since we left, called infernelzer, and brown-katies, that fairly pull the soul out of you. And so I 'm forced to put up with this poor colondy, or I 'd never a come sixteen thousand miles of water-carriage to it again."

Peggy opened her boxes, put her clothes into her drawers, spread out a smart new suit of clothes for Abner, including a cotton-velvet jacket, and a

dozen new shirts, made by a patent, she said, London, and warranted to fit anybody without m suring. And with that, having effectually stopp Abner's mouth, she has been observed to keep own pretty close about the climate of Australia, opens it very wide about the ruination of the Engl weather. That is her bulwark against the oc sional sly jokes of her neighbours, and especially Banks and Purdy, who often come in of an eveni and hold a chat in the garden house of Tallangett

THE END.

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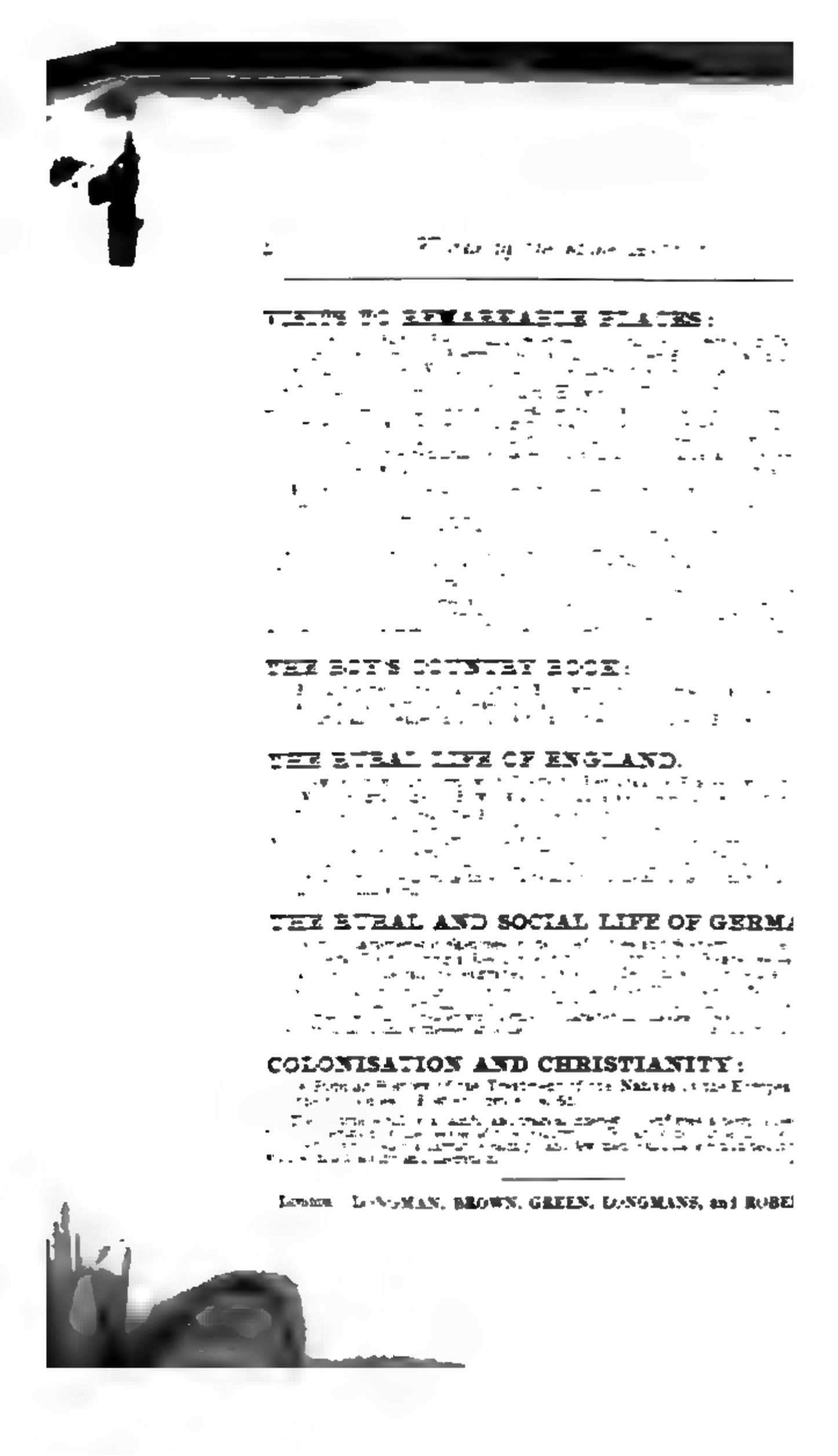

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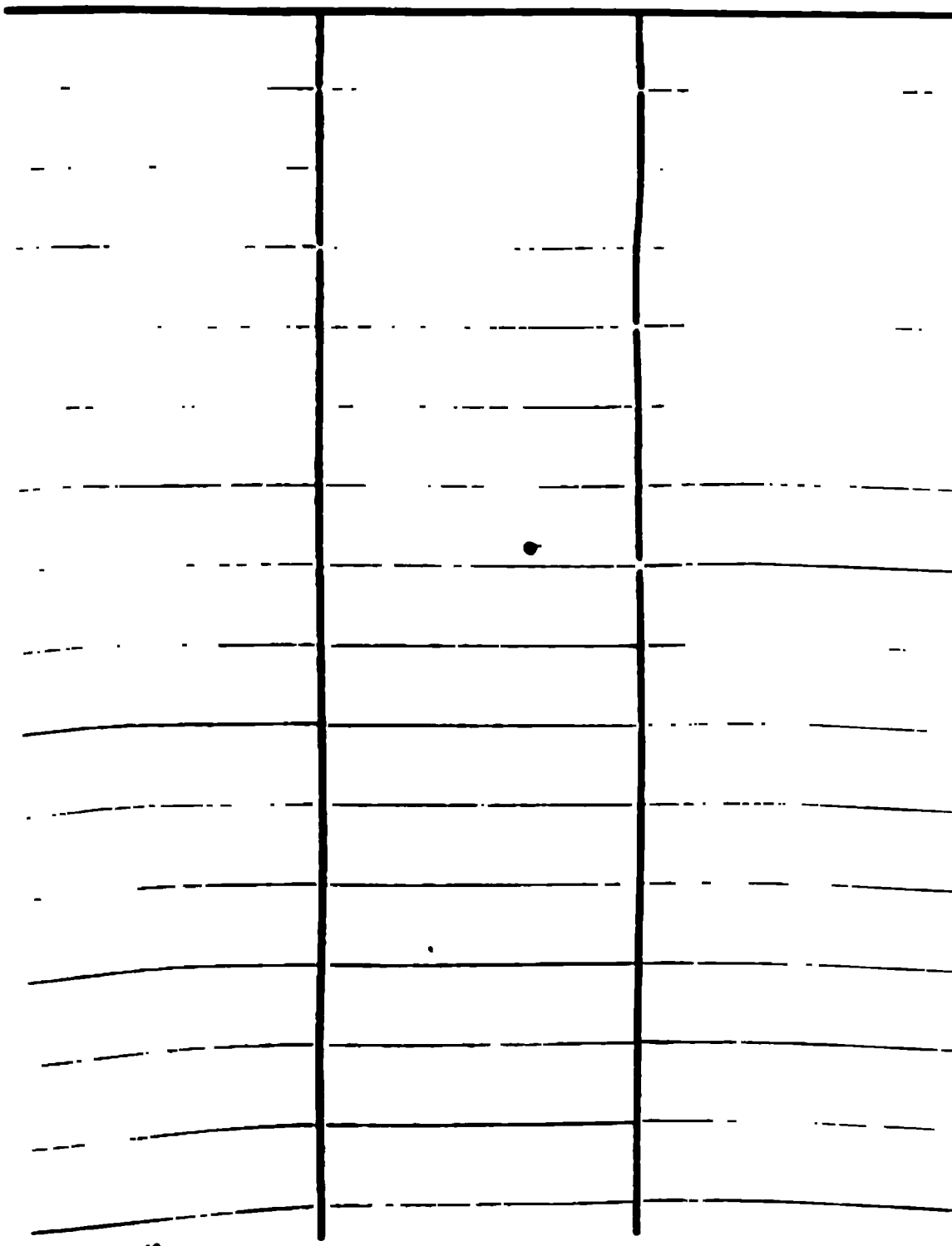

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